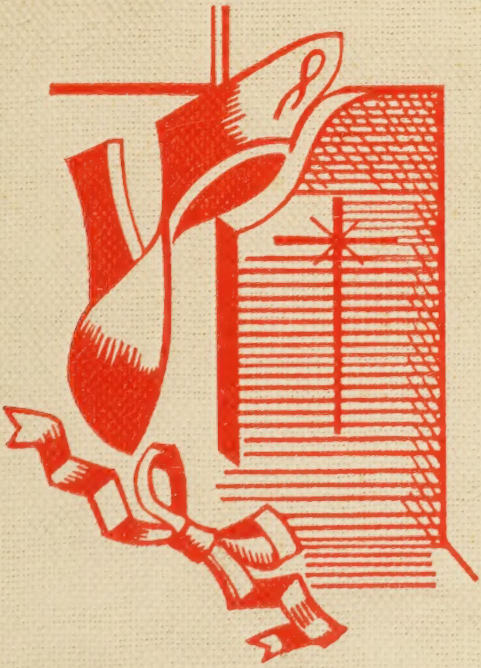

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MONSIEUR NICOLAS

or

THE HUMAN HEART UNVEILED

THE FOURTH VOLUME

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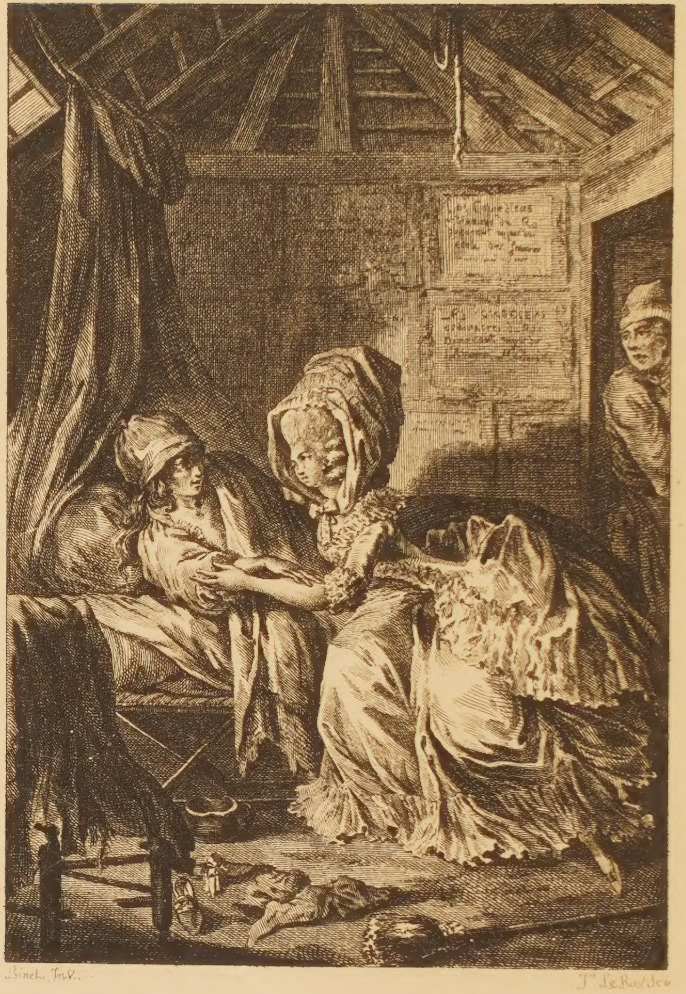

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MONSIEUR NICOLAS

or

THE HUMAN HEART UNVEILED

The Intimate Memoirs of

RESTIF DE LA BRETONNE

Translated into English by

R. CROWDY MATHERS

Edited with an Introduction by

HAVELOCK ELLIS

VOLUME IV

for subscribers only

JOHN RODKER · LONDON · MCMXXXI

DISCARD

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS TO VOLUME IV

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[*The illustrations projected for* Monsieur Nicholas *by Restif de la Bretonne were never carried out. A list of them will be found at the end of each of Restif's volumes. The illustrations listed above have been taken from other works of the author depicting scenes similar to, or identical with, those cited in* Monsieur Nicolas.]

THE
FOURTH EPOCH

Continued

1755

FOURTH EPOCH

(continued)

IN the evening I met Rose and her cousin in the Place Saint-Étienne, and was just beginning to converse with her, when we were surprised by her mother. I was not disconcerted, but went up and talked to Mme Lambelin. However, at a sign from Rose, I took my leave.

On the 15th I saw Rose at midday near the Providence, and gave her my letter and verses of the day before. The same thing occurred on the 16th. That evening she was in the Place, but I was unaware of it, and if her mother was spying on us, she was disappointed; for I did not see Rose until she had returned and I myself was coming back from a walk with Gaudet. . . . On the 17th I saw Rose in front of me and hastened my steps to overtake her; but she vanished, apparently on purpose, down the Rue du Petit-Séminaire. I joined her in the evening, and asked if I might stay for a little, but was answered coldly in the negative. We shall soon see that she had her reasons.

On the 18th of July I received my sixth and last letter from Rose. (It was a Friday.) It was, according to my notes, even more expressive than the preceding ones and promised me a second assignation for the following Sunday in the neighbourhood of the Benedictines. She had now decided to deprive me entirely of her conversation, except on such rare occasions as she chose to bring about; she wanted to weave a romance, and enjoy its situations, together with my pains and griefs and transitory raptures. Finally she wanted to drive me to approach my parents. As she did not know all that was in my heart, she thought me sufficiently enamoured for her to risk anything; and established herself as the longed-for heroine, the cause of sighs and tears and despairs, provocative of daring exploits. . . . Scarcely anything of the kind happened, and she must have been very much surprised! When I was alone I read her letter, and will try to remember it:

> *"I am writing to you, because the effort not to do so would cost too much. I have been thinking a great deal since Sunday, and you will scarcely be surprised at this. Is it not the moment for my friend to approach his parents? Our relationship assumed a gravity on Sunday that would seem to make this a duty. Also I hope he will persuade them to visit mine should circumstances require it. The gossip which has fastened upon us, and which prevented me from speaking to you yesterday, will take a venomous turn if neither father nor mother is forthcoming, whereas their appearance would make it impotent. Reflect on this, my friend. . . . The happiness you have found in me has given me sacred rights upon your person, but I will never avail myself of these save to your own advantage. Ah, how could I act otherwise towards the beloved with whose soul and being my own have been confounded and made one in a joint ecstasy! Yes, I feel that a girl should set the welfare of a favoured lover before her own. Recall those exquisite embraces, those burning sighs which we owed to Dorothée's generous complaisance, my dear lover. Remember how in your amorous rage you crushed the lilies and pillaged the rosebuds of a bosom I lacked power to defend! Sweet frenzy of my lover, how voluptuous it is in memory! And what madness held and tossed my own soul? I would have had you shake and pinch and bite and rend and bruise me! My love enraged me as it does a tigress. . . . Pardon these burning expressions of my passion for you, Anneaugustin; they should be permitted between us two, to a poor wretch who is forbidden to speak to or even see her lover, after an indissoluble bond has made her soul and body one with his! . . . The decree has gone forth: no more rapturous evening conversations, when every sense and every member is a tongue to speak for us! What to do, in such a cruel extremity? To deceive one's*

> *parents is a crime; to make a lover suffer is also a crime. . . . With rocks on either hand, I prefer to fall where my lover's arms will mitigate my hurt. . . . On Sunday I shall try to go to the Benedictines, on the pretext of paying a visit to some of my old schoolfellows there. Be somewhere on the road, but look most carefully, for fear that I am accompanied or followed. . . . Farewell, Anneaugustin. This letter may be your last from me, but my last breath shall be for you."*

This letter was unsigned. Besides the originals of these six letters, which I have tried to give from memory, I had copies of them in my sixth Note Book, together with my poem *La Syphilis*, the letters of *Manette Teinturier*, Rose's seventh letter, written in 1758, the letters of Mme *Greslot*, the Mlles *Destroches, Zéphire*, Françoise-Sophronie *Sellier, Loiseau, L. Gaudet, Breugnot*, Mlle *Berthé, Omphale*, etc., and my verses to Mlle *Claudon*, etc. Mme Lebègue kept or burnt the whole of this Note Book.

On the 19th I managed to give Rose my letter and verses as I passed her in the street, and that was all.

On Sunday the 20th I did not fail to keep my second assignation with Rose, and was near the Benedictines at the hour named. She never came. . . . The waiting was agony! It was a torture with which I was as yet unacquainted, and I experienced it in all its rigour. Rose watched me return ten times to her quarter, and kept herself concealed so as to leave me in suspense. She enjoyed my anxious restlessness; but it was a cruel, a barbarous pleasure. And what was the result of Mlle Lambelin's conduct? As I could not speak to her in the evening either, I went off in search of . . . Tonton Lenclos. . . . In my fifth Note Book I find these words: "*Dii boni! harum quæ egi auferte memoriam! Nunc permaxime doleo ab istis facinoribus. . . .*" I had seen Rose at four o'clock in her indoor clothes. In the evening she was in the Place Saint-Étienne, sitting in front of Dorothée's door; she saw me and yet never even asked her cousin to take a little turn with her, so as to come to me. . . . I went away indignantly to be, as I have said, completely unfaithful to her. . . .

On the 21st of July my parents paid a visit to the town to see how I was settling down in my new home with my cousins. They did not stay with Chambonnet as in former times, because they had a much more interesting house to come to and one where they were welcomed with delight: the house of M. Servigné, now become the home of their two Mairat nephews also. So they greeted their old friend without getting out of their covered cart, and came straight on to the Petite-rue-Saint-Germain. Père Servigné was just setting out for mass at the parish church, and as we had received no warning of this visit his surprise was equal to his joy. He embraced my father, saying: "Nothing more delightful could have happened to-day than a visit from my brother and sister of Sacy!" "Take up your book again, brother," answered my father, "and we will all go together and speak to our Good Father. Neither my wife nor I need anything just now." My mother had kissed her nieces and was talking to them, but my father made everyone set out for church, and I went with them to Saint-Loup. . . . Never was such piety: the old people were at the upper end of the pew, then came my cousins and their wives; and they all prayed without a single glance about them. I fell far below this standard, and was called to order by a little tap from my mother. I listened to the apostolic address of the curé, *M. Creuzot*, who, imperious with humility, benevolent through pride, so closely resembled the apostles. He demonstrated to the wealthy that it was to their interest to be kind, proving that both nature and reason compelled them to give to the needy, and painting a delicious picture of the satisfaction experienced by the charitable and humane. He blessed the rich who give to the poor, although they are constrained to do so by religion, nature and reason; seeing that religion orders it as a duty, nature imposes it through the pity she implants in every heart, and reason tells us that to maintain a love of country, a spirit of submission to authority, and a friendly feeling in the poor towards the rich, the former must be saved from the despair of utter want. . . . All the well-to-do were convinced by him and disposed to charity. The pastor then addressed the poor upon the degradation of begging and the enormity of the sin of idleness, suggesting various ways of doing without charity. In a word, he spoke in such a way as to increase the love of giving on the one hand, and to instil a fear of taking on the other. It was obvious that my father was enchanted, and this gave the greatest pleasure to my cousins' father-in-law. . . . We came back from church in a spirit of quiet cordiality. My parents could see how happy my mother's nephews were, and they thanked Edmée and Catherine and their father. "My sons-in-law are good workers," answered the latter. "My vines show it already and my property will soon be worth double." My estimable parents had to leave immediately after dinner, and while we were waiting for the meal to be prepared, I persuaded them (incredible as it may seem) to call on Rose's parents, alleging vaguely that I had met with the greatest kindness from this family. . . . The simple and good-hearted old people considered it a duty to recognise any kindness shown to their son. This insignificant courtesy was sufficient for my purpose, which was to be received by the Lambelins as a young man who was acting with the knowledge of those on whom he was dependent. But though Rose was very pleased by this skilful move, it did not have all the effect I had expected, and only earned me a couple of charming interviews, on the evenings of the 21st and 22nd. On the latter day she manifested the most ardent tenderness. We went for a walk with her cousin round the back of the Grands-Jardins, and Rose took advantage of a moment when we found ourselves alone under the *Porte-aux-Vaches* of the Bernadines to overwhelm me with her favours. . . . On this same evening Rose, in answer to something her cousin said concerning Drin, made this curious remark: "It will not be he who splits the apricot!" On the 23rd she let me wait for her in vain behind the Grands-Jardins; but on the 24th she made amends for this unkindness by a complete surrender, admitting me for the first time to her room, where, on her virgin bed. . . . And yet it was a Thursday. On the 25th she gave me an assignation for the following Tuesday in the neighbourhood of Saint-Julien, but assignations in this locality were never kept. . . . On the 26th I did not see her at all. . . . On the 27th I saw her at mass and at Vespers, but had no chance to speak to her. On Monday the 28th I met her in the La Providence road, but she turned down another street and went into a house to avoid me. I managed to join her in the end, gave her my Epistle and my rhymes, and asked her why I had not seen her for the last two days. She made some answer, as she ran away, which I could not understand; and, in the evening, the Mlles Patouillet were talking to her at her door, so I could not see her alone to get an explanation. . . . I must have been greatly disturbed, for I ran to vent my anguish on the very spot behind the Grands-Jardins where she had made me happy such a little time before.

On the 29th I caught a glimpse of her at her door, but her forbidding expression prevented me from accosting her. Incomprehensible girl! . . . The 30th was a day of anguish: I was sad and ill at ease on rising; I saw nothing of Rose during the day. In the evening I had three moments with her on three separate occasions, and I got a kiss; but this did not prevent her from avoiding me by retiring indoors, when she saw me approaching a fourth time. . . .

And so we come at last to the missed assignation on Saint-Germain's day, Tuesday.

On the 31st of July, Mme Parangon was still with her father and Rose was plaguing me. I could not go and see Toinette, because my visits would have been noticed now that I no longer lived in the house. So I went to the ballrooms in the evening, to forget for a while the sufferings Rose caused me. On the way thither I met the three Mlles Julien, Marianne Tangis and her elder sister, all unescorted. "What, no cavalier, fair nymphs?" I cried. "My lance is at your disposition, to prove to all who come that you are the most beautiful, the most affable, and the most virtuous ladies in the district!" And as I spoke, I took Marianne Tangis and Aimée Julien by the arm. We went to La Mâris's ballroom, which I had not attended for more than two months. The Mlles Ferrand, who were there, affirmed that they had heard I had gone to India. When the dancing finished, I went down to the port with my five fair companions. As we passed Ursule Meslot's house near the Porte du Pont, I was alone with Marianne, for Lacour and three more young men had joined us and were escorting the other ladies. Ursule and Joséphine Fourchot were taking the air in front of their houses, and clapped their hands when they saw me with Marianne; but without explaining why they did so. Mlle Meslot greeted pretty Tangis, and we paused for a word with her and Joséphine. While Marianne was speaking in a low tone to the latter, Ursule whispered to me: "So you have found your heart? I am delighted that it should be so well placed." This remark recalled me to my duty to Madame Parangon and Mlle Fanchette, and I heaved a melancholy sigh, which Marianne interpreted aright. "I have no grudge against you," she said, after we had taken leave of the two girls, "and will never have one, and I said as much to Maîne and to my sister. On the contrary, if ever we meet in the course of our lives, you will always find a friend in me as long as my heart beats in my breast." (Such were the words she used.) "Ah, Mademoiselle, I swear as much to you! Never will I forget that with you and through you I have been the happiest of men. . . . But," I added, "would you like me to speak frankly? I think I shall always be unlucky: something tells me so at this moment, and that when I let go your hand, I shall lose what I shall never find again! . . ." "Oh, Monsieur Nicolas, may you have all the happiness that I wish you to have! And if I cannot contribute towards it, at least may I never spoil it!" Moved by her words, I dropped a tear, and Marianne took out her handkerchief: "May that be the last tear you shed in sorrow," she said, as she wiped it away. . . . My heart is not proof against such generosity as this, and it throbbed with emotion as I said these very words to Marianne: "I have committed some great sin which has to be punished! . . . I am losing you! . . . For I cannot . . . no, I cannot . . . and I shall pay one day in bitter tears, and harrowing regrets . . . for the happiness I am passing by! . . . May you be happy, sweet and too generous girl, and may Heaven of its goodness give you a husband worthy of your excellence and your beauty! O Mademoiselle Marianne, you do not know all that I suffer! . . . You do not know and should not know. . . . Why did I meet you this evening? But it would comfort me to know that I was suffering alone, and did not add the crime of troubling your repose to all those others I am guilty of! . . . Sweet girl, how you have touched me . . . too much, ah, far too much, for my heart is rent! . . ." We had reached her door, and she said: "Come in, Monsieur Nicolas, and say how-do-you-do to my mother. She is very fond of you." "See my tears," I answered. "Would you have me appear thus?" "Do not let us go in yet," said the elder Mlle Tangis. "Let us go to the Place Saint-Étienne." We went thither and then walked up the Rue Notre-Dame, passing the Hôtel-de-Ville and Rose's house. She was at her door alone, and I boiled with impatience at not being free. I escorted Marianne and her sister home, and went in to see Mme Tangis. "Come and see us sometimes, Monsieur Nicolas," she said to me. "We are welcoming folk." "Yes indeed, Madame, in the best possible sense," I answered. "But . . . I am in some pain to-day. . . . I am not very well." I kissed the mother and her two daughters and was off like a flash of lightning. I was at the end of the Rue de la Fricauderie in an instant, but Rose had gone indoors, and was shutting her window on the first floor. I wished her "good evening" in a low voice, but she closed her window without answering, and I was nettled and wished I had stayed with Marianne. . . . And indeed, what a difference between the pleasures of mind and sense that Rose had given me, and those of the heart I found in tender Mlle Tangis's company.

Next day, the 1st of August, I thought myself completely cured of my passion for Rose. I laughed and talked, and I find this note in my *Memoranda*: *"Sed quam timeo, ne hoc simulatum gaudium amarrimo dolore sit sequutum."* In the evening, as I was not allowed to visit Rose, I went to the ballroom of one of our dancing masters, Fiévé, and Colombat kindly deserted his mistress to keep me company. As we were turning into Fiévé's street, we caught sight of Sophie Chavagny, Adélaïde Nombret (Annette Bourdeaux's cousin) and the two Tangis sisters in the Rue du Temple. They were going for a walk, but we accosted them and begged them to come and dance. At first they refused, but Marianne Tangis persuaded them, and we all went in to the ballroom. Though Marianne knew that I could not marry her, she showed her preference for me in the most unequivocal manner on this occasion. A very wealthy young butcher, and a man of education also, for he had studied and had been to Paris and to England, came to pay his addresses to her. She scarcely even answered him, and would not permit him to sit between herself and me, but pressed so close against me as to leave no room, and finally, to make her meaning perfectly clear, slipped her arm through mine. Young Hérissé (brother to that pretty Mamertine of whom I have spoken) took his cue from this: "Forgive me," he said to me. "I was not aware that you two were affianced." From these words I realised his intentions, and said privately to Marianne: "Dear friend, do you really mean to dismiss such an excellent young man?" "If I give myself to anyone, it will not be to him, nor so soon." However, I made a point of out-doing Hérissé in politeness. "I see that I have an intelligent lad to deal with," he said, greatly touched, "and one who likes me for being attracted by a girl he considers pretty." "Yes," I answered, "anyone who does justice to Mlle Marianne Tangis is a friend of mine by that alone. She is the best and most virtuous girl of my acquaintance." "I fancy you think that because you mean to make her your wife!" "My wife? No. But I would have done so had I been able. I love her, and she does not dislike me; but we are compelled to part, and were saying so only yesterday. We never expected to see each other to-day; it was just a chance. . . . Mlle Marianne wishes me all happiness as a sister, and I her, as a brother. . . . That is how we stand. . . . If I were my own master, I would marry her. . . . How happy are those who can do what they like!" It was my turn to dance, and I broke off to lead out first Marianne, and then Sophie Chavagny, that pretty brunette whom Aimée Châtelain had put upon my knees the day we went to see "The Crib." Hérissé said a few words to Marianne during my second minuet, and, as I did not want to interrupt him, I took Sophie back to the elder Mlle Tangis and stayed to talk with them while waiting for the country dances. Then, as I was engaged to Marianne and not to claim her would have seemed discourteous, I went up to her, and she put her hand in mine before I had uttered a word, saying to Hérissé: "I have promised this to Monsieur Nicolas." "If you have no one else in view," I said to the young man, "take Sophie and join our quadrille." By this he saw that I favoured his suit, and he asked the little brunette to be his partner. "Why did you leave me?" asked Marianne, with that sweetness which nothing could disturb. "I know what is in your mind, but *he* will never take your place. Let him take Sophie; she is a lovable girl. . . ." We made up our figure and the dance began. It was a very good quadrille, called "Inconstancy", because the ladies were allowed to give a hand behind their backs to their neighbour's partner. But Marianne would not do this, contending that if there was anything improper (*immoral* would be the term used nowadays) in a quadrille, it should not be countenanced, and her delicacy in this matter delighted Hérissé more than anyone. He admitted that I had roused his interest in Marianne, and said that, if it ever depended on him to care for her, she should be conscious of being well looked after. He told me this in the dairy whither we went to refresh ourselves after the dance; also, as Colombat was with his sweetheart's cousin, he politely volunteered to fetch some sugar. The girls thoroughly enjoyed our little feast. . . . I took Marianne home and again we passed Rose's house, but she had gone indoors. Nothing in particular passed between us, save perhaps Marianne's repetition of the phrase that *Hérissé would never be anything to her*, "if only for this reason, that he seems to think he can out-rival you in my esteem, even though you are still a bachelor. That is presumption, and I will never forgive it. . . ." Such was Marianne Tangis. I have made the observation that the girls of Auxerre were intelligent but not good: ah, when they were *good*, how adorable they were! Then they combined wit with goodness. Nowhere have I met women so worthy to be loved as Marianne Tangis, Madelon Baron, Edmée Servigné, Ursule Meslot, and Joséphine Fourchot; or so winsome as Maîne Blonde and Philis Hollier; or so daintily pretty as Émilie Laloge, the Mlles Thierriat, Aglaé Dhall and Narcisse, her younger sister; or so well made as Julie Dugravier; or with such skins of milk and roses and such seductive breasts as Marianne Roullot; or more provocative than the latter's sister Claudon, Sophie Douy, Aglaé Ferrand, Mme Linard, and a certain Mlle Paradis; or so witty as Rose and the Mlles Bourdillat. And all these qualities and all these charms were united in Madame Parangon.

It must not be thought that I had ceased to care for Rose. She still occupied my thoughts, but I was nettled by her coldness and the care with which she apparently avoided me. On Saturday morning, the 2nd of August, I resolved not to speak to her unless she called me to her. She in the meantime, with her jealous and unyielding disposition, was furious because she knew that I had been twice in succession with a pretty girl. At midday she made no effort to avoid me as she had done for several days; she waited for me to come up with her, and then said: "Monsieur, all is over between us. My mother has been given a faithful picture of your behaviour. Goodbye."

So I was dismissed. For the first time I had the painful experience of being jilted. I shed tears of rage, and thought them tears of anguish. My pride had been cut to the quick; and it is a matter of common experience that all the treasures we still possess will never salve a wound inflicted by scorn. . . . Madame Parangon was still away; I was sunk in my misery.

By the next day, Sunday, I was beside myself, and called on Rose's mother to ask her humbly what it was she had been told about me. She assured me she had heard nothing; so I inferred that Rose had spoken on her own account. This was scarcely consoling, as her opinion concerned me much more nearly than did her mother's. I tried to speak to the offended girl on our way back from mass, but a sharp "Go away!" was my only answer. At five o'clock in the evening I met her cousin Dorothée and told her all my woe; she seemed surprised by my tale. After supper I laid in wait for Rose, concealed in Mme Chouin's house; this emotional creature battened on lovers' quarrels. The tigress appeared at nine o'clock. "What, no hope?" I asked. "None," she answered, and this was not clever of her, for she irritated me instead of bracing me against defeat. "Listen!" I said. "Just one word!" She left the house, only returning for a moment to say with dignity: "I will write to-morrow and tell you what I think. . . ." All my firmness had deserted me, as it always does desert a man when he has to do with a domineering woman. After her departure, kind Chouin said to me: "But for her promise to write, I should have disapproved utterly of Mademoiselle Rose." Then seeing how deeply I was agitated, she took my hands and tried to comfort me. It was only sensual pleasure that I loved in Rose . . . and what if I had loved her as a person? . . . I was touched by my pretty friend's caresses and pressed her to my heart. By chance my lips encountered a snow-white, firm, resilient breast (for Adélaïde had as yet borne no children) and it was as a match to tinder; the flame blazed. . . . Twins resulted from her comforting of me; they were brought up in Paris by a pork butcher, as Adélaïde's nieces. She never had any other children. They are the heroines of *Le Second Modèle* in my *Nouvel Abeillard: La Philosophie des Maris*. . . . So here is yet another consequence of my early loves.

I received no letter from Rose on the 4th of August, so, on the 5th I asked her for it, at the same time giving her two of mine. She denied that she had promised to write. "What can I hope for?" I asked. "Nothing." "Then nothing is left me but despair." Her only answer was to forbid me to write again, as she would refuse to take my letters. Thus jealousy vanquished cunning and frustrated her designs – fortunately for me! For had she behaved better, I might have found myself in a very embarrassing position. (This is an exactly kept journal of a passion. May it be a lesson to others, for it might well be useful!) Apart from her jealousy, Rose was guided by some novel she had read; left to herself, she would have been wiser and more circumspect, for, according to her plans as she explained them later, she ought not to have refused to let me write. This would have preserved my attachment for her until my irreparable misfortune . . . after which I would certainly have thrown myself into her arms. As it was, her tyrannical behaviour alienated me to such an extent that pleasure gave place to pain, and this gave birth to dislike; not at once, but some four years later. So that, when I was free and with no prospect of an establishment, nothing in me responded to her advances. . . . But I must not anticipate.

I was so painfully affected by Rose's words that I could not sleep that night. I rose at five on the morning of the 6th and, in my fifth Note-book, wrote down everything that we have just read. I thus apostrophise this dear book, my only confidant (for passion personifies everything): "*Recipe, tu, care, uniceque fidelis, testis Codex, quod tibi fido, et nemini susurra,*" etc.

From the 6th to the 10th I was in a state of mind hard to endure! Rose's scorn revolted me. On the 7th, feeling a little more cheerful, I wrote this song:

> *I am going to leave you, O perfidious one, though love protests; my heart shall flee and escape away, after such unmerited disdain, and break no vow. For the most constant lover leaves when he is left.*

But a moment later I relapsed into my desolation.

On the morning of the 8th I was most dejected, but a glimpse of Rose eased my suffering, and from dinner-time until seven o'clock I was almost cheerful. I wrote another poem without leaving my case:

> *Ah, too happy freedom re-entering my soul! For in deserting her who has deserted me, I renounce my passion. O fortunate fault, fortunate misfortune, which strikes off my chains; alas! you free my heart and end my suffering.*

I knew that I should soon be leaving the town, as M. Parangon had only freed me in order to get rid of me on the first opportunity; so that evening I attacked Rose craftily. I opened the conversation by asking, somewhat foolishly, whether she was still angry with me. "I, angry!", and she went indoors before I could finish what I had to say. A few minutes later, she reappeared, and I approached her quickly: "Loved by you I would have stayed here; hated, I shall go away." She answered indistinctly, I only caught the words: "My mother can hear us," and we know just how much weight I need have given to that evasive remark! On the 9th I wrote to her, but Rose kept out of my way. Finally, I wrote again on the 10th, and watched my opportunity. At midday she was sitting in front of her door, and I presented both my letters. She pushed them away. I threw them into her lap indignantly, and turned on my heel. She let them slip to the ground. I did not go back to pick them up, but retired to the church of the Cordeliers, there to vent my passionate rage; and when I left, I chose the Rue Notre-Dame, so as to avoid passing by her again. On my way I met pretty Demailly, an acquaintance of Mlle Lambelin, and she asked me to go to Vespers at the Cathedral with her. I was glad of any distraction; I could even have wished to meet Marianne Tangis at this moment. I thought I had ceased to care for Rose and had even convinced myself that I detested her. Such was my attitude to my cruel Fair as I walked along chatting to Demailly; but when I caught sight of her cousin, the obliging Dorothée, issuing from her uncle Colombat's house, the need to relieve my feelings in complaint, led me to leave the gay Demailly to bewail myself with Dorothée. She listened to me simply, and promised to speak to Rose: I do not know if she did so, for I never saw her again. . . . I went to Vespers alone and made no effort to find Jeannette Demailly (that fair young girl who later was to comfort me in a time of trouble, as a sister, not as a mistress; but at this time I was not acquainted with the beauty of her nature), because I had the better fortune to see Marianne Tangis. I knelt beside her, and we prayed together. I have often noticed since that the thought of Rose never pursued me to Marianne's side; directly I saw this sweet girl I was at peace and almost happy. But I made this observation too late. . . . We left the Cathedral together, and I promised to come and fetch her after supper. A scarlet more brilliant than the rose stained the lilies of her cheeks: "Come in," she said, "if you have time? We shall be all alone and we can talk." I had not the strength to refuse this invitation, and we went into the upper room where we were quite alone. After a moment of silence on Marianne's part, and of extreme emotion, she said: "I think you care for me a little, else why should you have sought my company? I know the reasons which prevent you from becoming wholly mine; they are good, and I approve of them. Then what is left to me? This. I will marry when you marry, to still all regret in your heart and to tranquillise your wife; and to try to purge myself of every trace of a guilty love for another's husband. . . . But all my life I shall cherish you, because you were the first and only man to foster the exquisite . . . and painful emotion of love in my heart. And if ever . . . misfortune should overwhelm you . . . that misfortune will restore . . . all your rights over me. Then write: *I am in trouble!* . . . and I will dare all, abandon all, to fly to you, and devote myself to you. . . . Now I have said what has always been in my mind, though I never hoped to say it . . ." As she finished speaking she laid her head upon my breast, and I held her to me thus until the senses woke under this contact, and prompted me to seek completer union. . . . Eternal regret! I have known the happiness of Gods, but not known how to hold it. What am I saying? Time in his flight steals away both charms and strength, and that imagination which seasons happiness and makes it fugitive as himself. . . . I promised to come for Marianne after supper, and this was my intention when I left her . . . for ever. . . . Never was I to see her again.

Before passing on to those other events which were to change the course of my existence, I must relate what happened to sweet Marianne. After my departure she was ardently pursued by Hérissé. His suit was supported by her brother and sister and her mother; the two former used affection and persuasion, the latter spoke with the voice of authority. Marianne resisted for four years; but in 1758 she heard about my marriage with Henriette, and, later, a distorted version of my friendship with Demailly. Then she obeyed. Some time afterwards she found out that I had not turned to her in my gathering misfortunes, because a letter had spoken of her marriage as an accomplished fact. She learned that Henriette's departure had set me free again, and that my intimacy with Jeannette Demailly had been innocent. . . . When she heard these facts, this gentle girl fell into a sort of râging frenzy which killed her. . . . Pardon all the suffering I caused your pure and gentle spirit, Marianne! Agnès Lebègue and other malicious persons have punished me for it! . . .

Alas, dear Reader, little by little I was losing what I was never to recover. . . . (Although this book is for general publication, these facts, as I re-read them in my note-books, affect me so intensely that my emotion escapes on to the paper. I had meant it to be more philosophic, but I cannot make it so! . . .)

After supper I started out to fetch Marianne as I had promised; but, where the *Rue Saint-Germain* runs into the *Rue Saint-Simon*, I caught sight of Jeannette Demailly laughing with the Mlles Morillon. I went up to them, and Jeannette took my arm, saying: "Come quick, and see the strangest spectacle!" I went with her, thinking it was a matter of a moment or so, and a few paces on we were joined by the Mlles Ferrand. The five Mlles Morillon (three sisters and two cousins) followed us, with Manon Léger, Percinette and Duchamp, whom they met by the way. We had gone a little distance towards the *Hôpital* when we saw Tourangeot, who was drunk, energetically caressing his Marie in a ditch. The latter had difficulty in protecting herself. The girls and several lads who had accompanied them (Baras-Dallis, Josier, Léger, Dhall, Gremmery, the Morillon brother and his cousin, Coquille, Piffou, Sallé and so forth) all took a deep breath and then burst into a loud shout, which so terrified the two lovers that Marie swooned. Tourangeot hurled himself out of the ditch and, doubly drunk with wine and passion, committed a disgraceful action. . . .

He struck the elder Mlle Ferrand, who had stood her ground fearlessly. With one voice, the young men shouted: "Down with him!" but I intervened. "My friends, this man was a servant of M. Parangon, and later his apprentice. Now he is a journeyman printer and consequently my comrade. I will obtain satisfaction for you in the most seemly manner." Then I took Tourangeot by the arm, and said: "You have just done a disgraceful thing and would have been beaten to a pulp if I had not prevented it. But you must meet me with the sword at once. You have been with the troops, so I presume you can stomach a duel?" "I'm quite ready," answered Tourangeot. Mlle Ferrand and the other girls clustered round me, and implored me not to grieve them by running any risks! But I noticed that the men approved of my conduct. Baras-Dallis and Léger, the most alert of those present, went in search of a couple of swords, and returned in a few moments with my former dancing master, the Dutchman, who was also a fencing master and wanted to show me how to give the salute. He also showed me how to hold a sword; all of which Tourangeot already knew. The girls were pale and trembling; yet I thought I detected a certain curiosity. I profited by my master's lesson. I gave the salute as though we were fighting with foils, and lunged at my man at once, without rule or measure, wounding him in the throat. The blood jetted out in a terrifying manner, but the wound was really no more than a surgeon's bleeding. Tourangeot dropped his sword; the Dutchman tore a strip from the bottom of his shirt, and made a bandage that stopped the blood. Then he made him expectorate. "There is no danger," he said. "The sword only grazed him. . . ." Then he turned to the elder Mlle Ferrand: "Mademoiselle," he said, "blood has been drawn, and you should be satisfied." "Ah," she answered, "I am, and more than I desired." She threw her arms about my neck and kissed me twice; she said nothing, but tears were running down her cheeks. "Can you all keep a secret?" asked my master. "Yes, yes," cried every one. "Then say nothing about this duel, or you, Mesdemoiselles, will cause the arrest of the champion of your sex!" All the ladies promised to keep our secret, and I am sure that they did so; but the young men could not hold their tongues among themselves. Tourangeot was handed over to Marie, and the Dutchman walked back with them and made them realise that I had saved Tourangeot's life rather than attacked it. He convinced them so thoroughly that it was important from their own point of view to keep the affair secret, that they held their tongues. Near the Porte de Paris I slipped away alone and went back to my cousins' house, amazed at what had passed. During the quiet hours of the night I reflected on the consequences of my action in relation to Madame Parangon, Mlle Fanchette and M. Collet, and I was frightened! As for Rose, I was certain that she would not be angry about the affair, and that it might even be a means of patching up our quarrel. It would be otherwise with Marianne, and she was bound to hear about the whole thing as the elder Ferrand was a friend and neighbour of the Mlles Lacour. I was roused next morning by Bertrand and was much surprised to find that he was fully informed, for I had told my cousins nothing. He recommended me to go home until the storm had blown over, and I followed his advice.

At the Porte du Pont I found Gonnet, Lenclos, Léger, Baras-Dallis, Piffou, Jossier, Colombat, Burat, and several other men whom I knew but slightly: it was Baras-Dallis who had told Bertrand. They had not come together, but separately, and were there to escort me as far as the Fairy's wood beyond Saint-Bris. We took a glass of wine in silence at *la Bouteille*; the premises of this tavern had belonged to the father and grandfather of Maîne Lebègue, Agnès Lebègue's cousin. When we came out, Mlle Meslot was at her door, and not by chance. The sweet girl beckoned, and I ran to her, to find the parlour full of young and pretty nymphs. I entered, and Ursule presented me with an exquisite posy, which she herself fastened in my buttonhole, saying: "This is from me and from all the young girls of the town." I asked if I might be allowed to kiss her. "Yes, you may do so," she answered; and all her companions in turn offered me their pretty cheeks to kiss. I held Joséphine to me for a few moments and kissed her twice, saying aloud: "The second kiss is not for you; please give it to her with whom you saw me pass one evening." "I understand," answered Joséphine, "and it shall be done this very day, this morning; for I regard it as a sacred charge." "Ah, that doubles my esteem for him," cried Ursule Meslot, "for know that he is speaking of Marianne Tangis, my friends." The young butcher's daughter was so much liked in the quarter that all the girls congratulated me and I kissed them all over again. Some of them led up little sisters of no more than five or six years old to be kissed, and one young mother brought me her daughter. I kissed this pretty child three times, and she smiled at me as though she knew me: her name was Élise Tulout and she was Mlle Meslot's niece. . . . Such was my departure from . . . Auxerre . . . that town where for four years and one month I had been so happy, and so unhappy; where I had reached my full development; where fate had offered fortune to me, and more than one pretty companion. As I was passing under the Porte du Pont, Mlle Meslot came out a little way and cried, with a farewell gesture: "Goodbye, and do not forget her!" (She was speaking of Marianne.)

I would not let my friends come with me, and made them see the uselessness of this proceeding. "Put it abroad that we have spent the day together in town, and that yesterday's business was all a fiction," I said. They thought this an excellent idea and re-entered the town immediately, but by another gate. A ferryman took them across above the bridge near by the brook called *Vallan*, and landed them in the neighbourhood of the *Porte de Champinot.*

I wanted to be alone: stunned by my abrupt departure, I was in a curious state of mind. Forgetful of all that was more recent, my mind turned rather to the past and, seeking the Saint-Gervais archway, I gave a few tears to Madelon's memory, and vividly recalled Marguerite, of whom, save for that once from Madame Parangon, I had heard no word since I had said goodbye to that kind housekeeper under this same Saint-Gervais arch. Then I thought of Manon Prudhôt and Colombe, and finally of Marianne Tangis, and my tears began to flow. I reproached myself bitterly for having given all my thoughts to Rose when I should have reserved all that could be taken from Fanchette for that sweet and gentle lamb, who would have made me happy. . . . But one reflection consoled me; this charming girl would have bound me to her by too strong a chain. The thought of Madame Parangon did not affect me painfully; she was still with her father and I should be passing through Vermenton. I was going towards instead of away from her, and this eased my situation. I intended to forestall rumour and give a favourable version of the incident to her and to her father. Finally, my strange passion for Rose and her behaviour to me at the end had so cruelly tormented me that all was over in that quarter. I was being driven from her by an action which brought me credit with all the young girls (and they are the section of the public which has ever most concerned me), and I had just been crowned by

Ursule Meslot in the name of her sex. First Rose would hear about the incident and long to know who was the protagonist; she would like it to be me . . . and then she would learn that it *was* myself! What glory! and how deeply Rose would feel the loss of a hero! . . . This fantasy engaged me pleasantly along the road. . . . But why fantasy? Was it not as real as any other ground I have ever had for pride or joy?

When I reached Vermenton I could not carry out my plan, because M. Collet, Madame Parangon and Mlle Fanchette were away on a visit to a rich old relative in Semur. (That visit was to be disastrous to me, but no one knew this at the time.) So I had to give up the sweet pleasure of seeing them and the advantage of predisposing them in my favour.

When I reached home, I related my adventure frankly. My father commended my behaviour without hesitation or the slightest sign of doubt. But my mother could not conceive how I could have so exposed the life of her son! Twice during the evening she turned faint and, though she would not admit it, we guessed the cause of this. "Ah," she said to me at last, "did you not give one thought to the honour and happiness of being Mlle Fanchette's husband?"

I stayed in my father's house from the 11th to the 30th of August. At first my mind was occupied with Rose: I wanted to write a companion piece to her poem, describing my passion and our final rupture. My plan was to make it a continuation of my *Fastes*; but in the midst of my work my thoughts went back to Madame Parangon, and the jealousy Caulette had caused me. The two subjects amalgamated and produced a most sad and doleful story; although, judging from the preliminary note, the poem had been begun when I was a favoured lover. The two first lines end on the rhymes *amants malheureux* and *larmes et des vœux – which Love, fond Love will never scorn.* Later I address Love: *Permit two sighing lovers, consumed by the same fire, to visit your altar that your clemency may calm the violence of their evil. . . . I charm my weariness by singing of her harshness."* (Here I have jumped from the opening lines to the last.) I finished this lamentable and most extraordinary narrative on the 20th of August; and yet I find that I began an even more lugubrious *Elegy* on the 13th. (I had nothing to do but languish disconsolately, spin fantasies and dream of Rose. I had to rhyme to escape my listlessness.) The verse is smooth enough for this Elegy to be worth quoting in full,* but what should we find in it? The travelled roads of love and absence, doubt and infidelity; persuasive vanity's assurance that a Charmer only feigns severity and is the first to suffer by it; that she loves us or no one. This dolorous composition was not finished until the 30th of November, and then became a sequel to my *Fastes*, which was a detailed description of my life in rhyme.

On the 28th of August I heard that Madame Parangon had returned from Semur, and I was preparing to go and pay my respects to her, when I learnt in addition that she had set out at once for the town with her sister; so I made arrangements to follow her there.

On the eve of my departure, the 29th, I met Annette's mother, Mme Bourdeaux, at the house of her uncle, M. Antoine Foudriat. She gave me a most flattering reception, and this showed me that my action was generally approved of in the town. She told me that Tourangeot hardly dared to show his face, and that even M. Parangon had censured him. She added that the latter had just gone to Paris, and that this was the reason

*I printed these two pieces in the *Drame de la Vie*, pp. 1220-1230 *bis*, to avoid encumbering this text. As we know, the *Drame* is, as it were, the "lumber-room" of this book.

why Madame Parangon had left Semur so hurriedly, and only paused at Vermenton for dinner. I was delighted by this news, and left Sacy next day in the cool of the morning.

I walked through the woods instead of going by Vermenton. Opposite Courtenay and before I entered the Hôpitaux wood, I came upon Marie-Jeanne, whom I had seen twice during my visit to Sacy. I have already mentioned that she was married to Edme Boujat, a cousin of my maternal step-brother. "Monsieur Nicolas," she said, "I have come to see and speak to you just once more, because they tell me that you are going to Paris, and I shall never see you again." "But you will see me, Marie-Jeanne," I answered, "for my father and mother live here, and I shall never forsake my native place." "Yes, but I mean that I shall not be here any more. . . . I was wrong to marry, when my heart was turned elsewhere. I could have lived untroubled as a maid, but my mother said it would console her in her widowhood if I married, so I yielded to her wishes; and I hope God will have mercy upon me, for I did it out of obedience. I have come to say goodbye." She wept, and I wept with her compassionately, remembering our early years together. I said all that I could think of to comfort her. "Your tears are my sweetest consolation," she said. "But I am wounded here . . . and your presence in Sacy for these twenty days has brought me to the end of my strength. Farewell, my first and only love! . . . I bear no grudge against you; and far be it from me to entreat you or beseech you: but never forget Marie-Jeanne Lévêque!" "I forget Marie-Jeanne!" I exclaimed. "I am writing my life" (I was referring to my *Fastes*) "and she shall appear in it as she deserves, as a fine and excellent girl whom I loved dearly. You would have made me happy had you been my wife, and I left you against my will." "Now I am satisfied," she said. "Good-bye! goodbye!" I approached simply and frankly to kiss her, but she said: "No, I am married. It would not be decent now to let you kiss me. . . . Good-bye, Monsieur Nicolas . . . and thank you for having a little comforted me." She left me at once and, in a few minutes, a little valley hid her from my sight. Just as I was entering the wood I glanced back, and saw her on the hill opposite; she was on her knees and, as far as I could see, was dissolved in tears. I knelt with her and stretched out hands, which were certainly less innocent than hers, to heaven. . . . She rose a moment later and, with a gesture of farewell or gratitude, disappeared. She was buried a week later and her husband, who adored her, did not survive her loss. . . . I have wept for both of them.

It was a sad journey: the woods and solitudes inspired a tender melancholy. I remembered my first journey to Auxerre, and I thought of Jeannette when I passed the road from Irancy to Courgis. The sight of Saint-Bris cheered me up a little.

I was drawing near to the town and was gazing at the old church of Saint Gervais, not fifty paces distant, when I met an old man, just in front of two gardeners' houses situated on the main road, the only houses in the parish of Saint Gervais. He saluted me and I returned his salutation with respect. He walked on for about twenty paces, and then stopped, calling out: "Young man!" in a loud voice. I halted out of consideration for his age, and looked at him. He turned back towards me and I went to meet him half way. "Did I not see you gazing with emotion at that old, half-ruined church?" he asked. "You did, venerable Sir," I answered, "for there I tenderly and sorrowfully mourned for my betrothed, who was young and beautiful and fond, virtuous and rich. There I wept for her on the day that she was buried." The old man looked at me for a moment without speaking. "But she is not buried there. There are only two or three poor people in this parish." "No, honoured Sir; but I sought solitude and silence wherein to weep for her." "Young man, I belong to Auxerre; I was born there; but I have not lived in it for forty-five years, and every time I come to this town where I was born, I leave it weeping, for every time I find one less of my old friends there. . . . I thought you were weeping for joy at seeing it again." "I have often done so; for I love the town as though it were my native place." "Where do you come from?" "I come from Sacy, five leagues from here through the woods; but this town has become my second home." "O good young man, may Heaven bless you! . . . Is it long since you left here?" "No, not long." "Have you heard about the lad who so nobly avenged one of my compatriots, a young girl?" "Venerable Sir, I left the town nineteen days ago to-day." "You have counted the days! You love my native town, you love it! . . . Blessings on you! . . . And you have not heard about this lad?" "No one has told me anything about him during my absence." "Then I will walk back with you to the bridge, to kiss the last stone of it once more, and I will tell you the story as we go." So we walked together, and the old man made a fine thing out of a business about which I knew more than he did, and used such vivid and affecting language that I was moved to tears. Seeing this, he regarded me, and said: "You are weeping! Ah, for that I both respect and pity you! You are sensitive and you are young; you have much to suffer." He could not make up his mind to part from me, and came across the bridge; but under the gateway into the town he stopped. "I will not enter," he said, "at least, unless you promise to have dinner with me?" "That honour is denied me, as I am expected . . . I am awaited." "In that case I will not urge you; but I have taken to you, because you seem sensitive and good, and you love my native place."* While he was speaking, M. *Tulout*, the husband of Mlle Meslot's elder sister, caught sight of me talking with the old man, and came up to embrace me and say a few words concerning my duel. I made it clear that I wanted to enter the town *incognito*, and he furthered my wishes by letting me slip through the postern near the fountain of the Dyers without making my presence known to the neighbourhood. I saluted the old man, but, as I was going quickly away, I noticed that M. Tulout was speaking to him, and caught the words: "*That is the man.*" Immediately the old man hurried on to the bridge and coughed loudly. I looked back, and he saluted me; then clasped his hands, then struck the parapet and dried his eyes. When I glanced back again, I saw that he had crossed the bridge and was kissing the last stone before departing. I was deeply touched by this action! . . . He went on his way with many backward glances at his beloved town.†

I reached my cousins' house at ten o'clock, and found Edmée Bertrand there alone. "Oh, you were so wrong to go away," she exclaimed. "The Mayor said that far from being punished, you ought to be rewarded – as you were by the girls of the Porte du Pont." This pleasant news was very satisfactory. I washed and dressed, and set out to wait on Madame Parangon.

Just as I was coming out of the Petite-rue-Saint-Germain I met Mme

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*Republicans, republicans, have you ever loved your country as this virtuous Auxerrois loved his? And people say that the fatherland has ceased to exist in France! . . . (But they will never say this again: the 12th of August, 1790.)

†It is shown in one of the illustrations, though I have not mentioned it in the text, that certain ladies – Mme Lebègue (René's wife), Mme Corhaux and her two daughters, and a young woman who was to cause me much unhappiness – were picking peas in the field or garden where Potard the gardener's house now stands, and it seemed to me that they were mocking at the old patriot.

Chardon (Claudon and Marianne Roullot's sister Eulalie) with Mme Carouge (formerly Mlle Paintendre). Catching sight of me at the turning, the latter exclaimed: "There he is!" and guessing that they were speaking of me, I saluted them smiling. I waited until they were round the corner, and then turned back to hear what they were saying. *"Yes, she ran away after a quarrel with her mother, during which the latter ill-treated her badly. She went all alone on foot to Sens, and arrived without misadventure, so I hear. Her father followed her on horseback, but did not overtake her on the road. They say that he found her at Sens with two maiden ladies, with whom she had taken refuge directly she arrived. They would have liked to keep her, so he says, but he brought her home and handed her over to her mother, who promises to give her a rough time."*

I had no desire to hear more, as I did not know the person of whom they were speaking (I got to know her only too well afterwards!), so I hurried on my way to her for whom my heart was yearning.

"And where do you come from?" asked Madame Parangon smiling. "We have heard nothing of you since you left." "I went into hiding at Sacy." "That Tourangeot is a bad fellow. I have never liked him; he is a real Tartar. But M. Parangon was infatuated with him. I have just given him to understand that he must leave the house, as he is neither servant nor apprentice. . . . It is now eleven o'clock: Fanchette is upstairs dressing, and I am busy. Come and dine with us; and use the hours between now and then for seeing anyone you have to see, for you must spend the afternoon with us."

I left her doubly delighted; my duel had done me no harm in Madame Parangon's opinion, and I was going to spend half the day with her. I caught sight of Rose as I was passing her door, and she assumed a gracious expression. But I had just seen Madame Parangon, and Fanchette was in the town; I could have defied Cyprus and the Graces and Psyche, if Fanchette were not the Graces, and Madame Parangon, Venus. . . . I went up boldly to Rose and addressed her as though I still adored her. "So I must bid you an eternal farewell!" "Why? Where are you going?" "To Paris." She smiled, as though in mockery at my eternal farewell; for Paris was only forty-five leagues distant, and, connected as we were by water, Auxerre was little more than a suburb of it: it only cost six francs to go by boat. And yet it was as though I knew that Paris. . . . Paris, the queen of cities . . . was more distant for a lover than America . . . and, almost conscious of this thought, I said again: "Good-bye, Mademoiselle." Rose looked serious; perhaps the same thought occurred to her also. "Good-bye, Monsieur." She wanted . . . she was going to add something . . . but I withdrew, almost with a feeling of sadness. Yet I was just thinking of turning back to her, when I caught sight of Brother Saint-Hermine, Gaudet d'Arras's former friend and comrade. We embraced, and he took me towards the cloister. Gaudet caught sight of us and hurried up to me. I promised to see him in the course of the day. Speaking of my duel, Saint-Hermine told me that my action was all the more highly commended because the young lady in question was not my mistress. . . . Then he said something about myself and Rose, and I asked, astonished, who had told him. "Brother Boulanger." "And where does Brother Boulanger come in?" "Ah, that's a secret!" "My friend, tell me. It matters to me." "Very well; your discretion about your own affairs is sufficient guarantee that you will keep a secret if you promise to." Then he told me that Rose had been madly in love with Brother Boulanger the year before, that is to say, when our acquaintance was just at its beginning; he gave me to understand that the Brother, one of the handsomest men in the order, had triumphed and that Rose had even been in his room. . . . I listened overwhelmed. . . . Twelve o'clock struck: Saint-Hermine was obliged to leave me, and I went back to Madame Parangon.

I had a sense of freedom that I had not felt since June the 1st. I was gay and eager. The sight of Mlle Fanchette, who really looked ravishing, and still more of Madame Parangon, was balm of joy upon my senses. Conversation was general during dinner, but we talked in private afterwards: Madame Parangon, Mlle Fanchette, and I.

"You ought to know," began the former, "that my father and I have decided on your future, and you are to remain a printer. We first of all thought of a business in Sens, and we have come back to this idea. M. Jeannet, the proprietor, is old and has no children except for one daughter, and she has been married for a long time to a councillor and also only has a daughter. I have applied to the Chancellor for the reversion of the business and have obtained it. . . . You must stay some time in Paris, as it is necessary for you to learn your business thoroughly, and to establish personal relations with certain booksellers whose names I will give you. But! Keep in good ways – for see the prize I mean to give you." At these words I knelt at Fanchette's feet, and said: "Yes, I will avoid all evil, and bring you back a body and a heart worthy of you! I will never cause a single regret to this adorable sister, our guardian angel. . . ." I kissed her beautiful hand, and held Colette's also to my lips. . . . "In one or two years, more probably two, we will have you approved, and you will be established in Sens with a fully equipped house in which to receive your wife. . . . I have heard plenty of little things about you," she added smiling, "but I do not think very seriously of them. I know you, and once you have duties to fulfil, you will fulfil them; for you have a conscience and a sense of honour." "Did you really fight a duel?" interrupted Fanchette. "Yes," answered her sister, "and he was right to do so. Nevertheless it would have been very terrible if he had killed a man! . . . Let it be a lesson to you." "Then were you a great friend of the lady?" asked Fanchette. "I only know her slightly," I answered, "and am even less intimate with her betrothed. It was only your sex, Madame and Mademoiselle, that interested me in her." "Oh, he always has an answer ready!" said Fanchette smiling. "It is quite true, sister," answered Madame Parangon. "I know that he is only slightly acquainted with young Ferrand." Mlle Fanchette did not conceal her satisfaction, and this was very pleasant to me; she showed an eager interest in the whole affair.

We were interrupted by the arrival of Mme Minon and her husband. I was overwhelmed by a flood of questions, put with a volubility which scarcely left me time to breathe. I answered the lady and her husband, but I could see, not without some annoyance, that they would have liked to have found me blameworthy, if only of some attachment for the elder Ferrand. . . . (Why should they have looked so far afield, when I had carried on my intrigue with Rose at their very door, almost under their eyes? Had they known of that, it would have been all over with me.) They made me realise how dangerous it had been to make heroines of either Rose or Marianne Tangis. Fortunately some other ladies arrived and I was delivered from Mme Minon's interrogatory. . . . I took Mlle Fanchette aside, and said to her: "I adore you. I have never felt as I do to-day what a difference there is between Madame Parangon's charming sister and every other woman. Would you like to hear how I feel towards you in my heart? For I long to give you a full and true assurance of my affection more ardently than you can possibly wish to have it." "Yes, please." "Then I swear that I will think of none but you, and that I will consecrate every thought and every desire to you. I feel that you are all my happiness, and pray that some day I may contribute to yours." "And my friendship, my esteem and a real affection shall be yours to keep. My sister's choice is dear to me – dearer than if I had chosen for myself, for then I should have been less certain of his merit. . . . I have already given some proof of this. Our sick relative authorised some one at Semur to pay his addresses to me, but I entrenched myself behind my sister and she protected me." (During the next two years we shall see how two young people kept these vows of love, sworn upon the altar of affection.)

Here, to my great regret, we were interrupted by a certain Mme Robin. "Tell me about your duel." On a sign from Madame Parangon I repeated the story and included my meeting with the old man near the town. "Ah," exclaimed Mlle Debierne, "that is my uncle Debierne, who lives at Saint-Bris . . . it must be he!" Then she asked me to describe his appearance and his dress, and they corresponded perfectly. My tale brought tears of emotion to the ladies' eyes, and especially to Fanchette's, though she sought to hide them under a pretty smile. This gave me an excellent opinion of her sensibility, and I said as much in a whisper to Madame Parangon, who blushed with pleasure; for, as we know, she loved her sister fondly, and was delighted when qualities of heart were observed in her.

These unexpected visits had come to an end, when Bertrand arrived to tell Toinette that my father was in town, and she came upstairs with the news. "Run quickly to welcome him," said Madame Parangon, "and we will expect you both for supper." I hurried to my cousins' house and found that my dear father, as anxious for his son Nicolas as though he had but one instead of thirteen children (for Baptiste had just died, at the age of fifteen, in the house of my sister Beaucousin), had followed me, trusting no one but himself, to make sure that I had nothing to fear, and so to set my mother's mind at rest. He was overjoyed by what he had already heard, and by what I was able to add to this.

Then I went out to announce my departure to my friends and to take leave of them; but I did not see one of my female acquaintances. I had noticed with delight that Fanchette was a little jealous, and I was constant to her for the first and only time in my life. My farewells to Loiseau and Gaudet were the only ones of any interest. Gaudet said: "One young man leaves a big town, and leaves it empty as far as I am concerned." Loiseau said with emotion: "I shudder for the sufferings ahead of you! But perhaps your sensibility will keep you in good ways. My friend, whatever it may be, confront your lot with courage and with dignity. You have something of both in your character. Fortunately you are armed against seduction, for what you are leaving behind you here is far above anything you will find there. . . . Yet, though you are honourable and affectionate, your passions are so ardent that, unless you keep a constant watch over yourself, a slip is not impossible. How I wish I could see you on your return here! For I am sure that Paris will develop you, and make another and a better man of you. Oh, why am I not in a position to come and live near to you! I am only at home with a man who can think; I am utterly alone with all the rest. . . . I will not say 'Good-bye', my friend, it is too conclusive, but . . . till we meet again. . . ." It only remained to say farewell to Toinette, my pretty, good Toinette, who loved me so fondly and unselfishly. "I have come to say good-bye, my so dear Toinette," I said, throwing myself into her arms. She did not speak; a spasm shook her and she could not stand; so she sat down, and, drawing me on to her knees, clasped me in her arms, as a mother does her little child. I turned my head to kiss her, and her face was wet with tears. "Dear girl, how grateful I am for the treasure of your affection," I said. "Alas," she cried dolefully, "we are parting, and perhaps for ever!" "We shall meet again in two years." "Ah, the most precious days hang but by a thread, and I am not going to count . . . on mine!" She rose at the sound of a woman's step, and I slipped up the little staircase to the printing room, whence I heard Mme Minon ask Toinette whether I was upstairs with her sisters. On the latter's statement that I was in the printing room, but that my father was possibly with Madame, the fair Minon left without coming upstairs.

I took leave of Bourgoin and Bardet and the other workmen. All were much surprised by my abrupt departure, for everyone had expected that, if any change were made, I should be the one to be kept; and all their goodwill to me returned with my voluntary resignation. Then I hurried to the Servignés' to fetch my father, and, before eight o'clock, I presented him to Madame Parangon and her youngest sister.

They welcomed him as a father, and the venerable man was so deeply touched by their respectful attentions that he was moved to tears. Then, as it dawned on him how very pretty was Mlle Fanchette, the honest man stared at me in astonishment, as though to say: "But why all those other girls whom you have talked so much about?" We were able to converse during supper, as the table had been laid in the upper room, and the four of us were alone. Madame Parangon described her plans for my future. My father could not contain his joy; and he expressed it in touching phrases which came straight from his responsive heart, so that Madame

Parangon exclaimed: "Oh, how proud I am that my sister is to be the daughter-in-law of so estimable a man!" "I do not know if I shall ever live to see it," answered my father, "but the day on which Mademoiselle Françoise Bénédicte Collet calls me father will be the happiest of my life!" Fanchette kissed the old man impulsively, and her sister caressed her fondly for this gesture, as she answered: "You will see it, papa Restif, and I shall see you and papa Collet clasping hands on that day. . . ." Tears of joy (the only joy I ever gave him) were in my father's eyes, and out of his great happiness, he exclaimed: "I give thanks to you, O Lord my God, in that you have granted me favours which I should never have dared to ask for in my prayers! . . . I thank you too, Madame, and you Mademoiselle. . . . And you also, my son; and may your children some time give you as much joy as you have given me to-day."

Nine o'clock struck, supper was over, and we prepared to leave the ladies. I was setting out at five o'clock next morning, and had to say good-bye. Madame Parangon offered to embrace me, but, in my father's presence, I fell upon my knees and pressed my lips to her hand, saying: "What would have become of me, without your kind indulgence?" But when I rose, she kissed me and clasped me to her breast for a moment . . . oh, what a moment! . . . I can still feel her against my violently beating heart. . . . Then I turned to Mlle Fanchette, and with her I was freer and less moved. I kissed her, and still held her in my arms while I said: "I am leaving you, Mademoiselle, but I shall be thinking of you always. Sweet girl, you will be ever present to my mind, and the hope of seeing you again will be my only consolation in the privation to which I am condemned! . . . Ah," I exclaimed, "if I had my way! . . . but that is not practicable." "I know what you mean," said Madame Parangon. "If I had my way, you would only part as husband and wife. . . . But how could I make this plan acceptable? The only reason I could offer would be my own immeasureable longing . . . an ardent and overmastering desire. . . ." I was still holding Fanchette in my arms. "If any bad conduct on my part ever comes between us, may I perish on the spot! Great God, I invoke your anger, and my father's and my father's father's curse upon me if ever, by my own fault, I make myself unworthy of this charming girl, whose beauty finds no equal in nature, save in . . ." But Madame Parangon interrupted with emotion: "You will keep your oath . . . my heart tells me so and I am reassured." "How could he do otherwise?" exclaimed my father, pointing to Fanchette. "Look at her, Madame!" I kissed the sweet girl again; I could not let her go. . . . Alas, I was losing the last and most precious of my treasures! I held her in my arms, and she was as much moved as I; tears stood in her beautiful eyes; tears flowed down her sister's cheeks; my father was almost beside himself. . . . Suddenly Madame Parangon took us both by the hand and led us, still intertwined together, into the next room and set us in front of a portrait of her venerable father. "Promise my father that you will marry and love each other always." "I swear it!" I exclaimed. "I swear it," repeated Fanchette. "Promise that you will never do anything that may estrange you from her." "I swear it, Madame, to you and to your father and to my father." "And you, sister, promise that you will never allow another man to woo you." "I promise, sister," "And I bear witness to your vows before the Supreme Being. . . . Eternal ill on any who force you to break them!" A giddiness took her as she said these words, and my father supported her in his arms. "I have united them," she said, and the old man kissed her hand. "I see now, Madame, with my own eyes, that you are above all the praise my son has given you. . . . Oh, what an angel

Heaven has sent to watch over him!" . . . I still held Fanchette, and our momentary union seemed to please her sister; but I let her go at last, saying: "I feel as though my heart were being ravished from me!" "No, no, dear friend, I answer for her," said Madame Parangon, quickly. "For whom are you answering?" I exclaimed, as one possessed. "Can you answer for yourself? For if I were to lose you . . ." and at these terrible words, tears burst in fountains from my eyes . . . (I was never to weep upon her grave. I wept for her then! . . .) She shuddered, saying: "What sad good-byes! . . . And I had wanted to make them cheerful!" "Ah, forgive me, Madame! It is not the first time I have caused you pain. . . ." "But it is the one I have most pleasure in forgiving; because the occasion of it is so sweet to me!" I kissed Fanchette once more and, seizing my father's hand, led him downstairs.

An hour had slipped away in our farewells; the clock struck ten. "In the old days," I said to Madame Parangon, as I shut the half-door between us, "this was my time for coming in. To-day it is the time . . . for going out. . . ." Her heart as well as mine contracted at these simple words, for she had to choke back her tears as she answered, pressing my hand: "That is the unkindest word of all! . . . Kiss your Fanchette once more. . . ." The sweet girl leaned over the half-door, and offered me her pretty lips which I had never yet touched with mine. I trembled. . . . I shuddered. . . . And, after forty years, my nerves still thrill deliciously to that sweet kiss, the only favour I was ever to receive from one who was promised and given to me for a wife by her father and sister. I kissed her with Colette's hand held pressed against my heart! And as I relinquished both, I exclaimed: "My soul is deserting me . . . and I feel . . . it is . . . for ever! . . ." I knew not what I said. . . . Madame Parangon sighed. . . . I can hear her still. . .

"Go, unhappy boy! You infect me with your sensibility and your despair! Go! . . ." It was the last word she ever said to me.*

So I left the two persons who were dearest to me in the world. . . . I left them for ever. . . . From that moment, dear Reader, I lost everything! And I was only twenty years old! . . .

At thirty paces I looked back; they were still standing at the door, but I could only see a patch of white. "One could fancy that Madame Parangon was covered with a shroud," I said to my father, putting my hand on his arm to stop him. "Do you see, father?" "No, no!" he answered. I left his side and rushed back to the door. They had just shut it. I did not knock, but I listened. Madame Parangon was standing with Fanchette and Toinette at the bottom of the stairway leading to the upper room, preparatory to going up with them. "My dear, I weep in spite of myself," she was saying to her sister. "These goodbyes are heartrending! . . . Ah, and why? . . ." I could not hear the rest, for she went upstairs and at the same

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*As Funck-Brentano has pointed out, it is a romancing account of his departure from Auxerre which Restif here gives. There was really a stormy scene with Madame Parangon, of which he tells nothing, and he left under her displeasure. This appears clearly from what he actually wrote at the time. In *Le Drame de la Vie* (Vol. V, pp. 1223-30) he printed a poem addressed to Colette, which he had begun to write on the 15th of July, 1755, and continued to write, at dated intervals, until the 30th November. At the head of this poem he wrote the significant sentence: "I began these verses when my Colette still loved me, and only finished them when, overwhelmed by her severity, I avoided it by flight in the month of August." In the course of the verses he tells us that "a light moment given to a certain young object" (and in the margin he names Marianne Tangis) was enough for him to be regarded by Colette as "perfidious, inconstant, and flighty," and "she took from me her heart." The rest of the poem is full of his grief, and at the end he says: "I have lost all I value in losing my Colette, for I count very little on the young Fanchette." It is of course possible that Madame Parangon's heart softened before she died and that she really wrote to Restif in Paris as he tells later. But this re-fashioning of the real incidents warns us that we cannot always distinguish between things as they happened and things as Restif – looking back over nearly forty years – likes to imagine they had happened. He was here, in a greater degree than Goethe, writing his *Dichtung und Wahrheit*. [Ed.]

time the baize door was shut. I could just see her shadowy outline; I could still hear her voice, but the words were deadened. . . . Then all was silence. It was Toinette who shut the window; I saw her, and only her. . . .*

I went back to my father, who was waiting for me, and told him that the door was shut. "Come, then," he said to me. "O estimable sister! O sweet child!" he continued as we walked. "I could have believed myself back again with Rose Pombelins and her sisters. . . ." He praised them both, reviewing all that they had said and done; but his words could not charm away my grief, and I gave utterance to deep sighs. . . . When we reached my cousins' house, I described my meeting with old M. Debierne. My father knew him, and promised to see him on his way through Saint-Bris. It was eleven o'clock when we went to bed and I was so tired that I slept, but not restfully. A frightful dream which, on awaking, I thought real, disturbed my mind, and sent me jumping out of bed.

I dreamt that I was on the point of leaving Auxerre: the boat was pushing off from the bank, the gangway was being lowered away, when I saw Madame Parangon fall into the water. I tried to rush to the rescue, but her infuriated husband prevented me, holding his unsheathed sword against my breast. . . . In the meantime Colette was carried onwards by the current. Two hideous monsters seized her. I pushed aside her husband, jumped to land, and flew to her rescue. . . . Toinette was there. "You can do nothing!" she said in tears. "She will die!" Then Colette disappeared, and instead I saw a bleeding body in the middle of the Bout-parc woods, which ferocious beasts were rending. I was bathed in sweat. I screamed. . . .

*Oh, oh, how the tears pour down my cheeks as I re-read this incident, on the 27th of May, 1788, after a lapse of thirty-three years! And again on the 12th of May, 1791; and on the 5th of December, 1794, while composing; and on the 12th of February, 1795, while reading the last revise!

Awake, I looked about for the fearful objects of my dream. I thought I had already left, and slept and woken on the boat. I do not know what time it was, but at this moment there passed down the street, in front of Edmée's door, something that was being dragged along, a woman who was uttering groans; I jumped, or I thought I jumped out of bed, and looked out of the window. . . . I could see nothing but the sad, dark, emptiness of the deserted street. . . . I have never known whether I really got up, or whether this was a continuation of my dream; but I thought I went to bed again and slept. . . . At four o'clock my father called me.

The boat left at five, and I hurried into my clothes. My cousins and their wives were up; and my cousins carried my baggage. My father wanted to hear mass at the Cathedral, and I went with him, but while he was praying, I slipped away, and ran to the Clock-tower for one last glimpse of Madame Parangon's door. I saluted the house weeping; I kissed the threshold, and exclaimed: "Farewell, farewell, cradle of my youth and birthplace of my reason; home of every experience, of pleasure and of pain, happiness and remorse; house which I am perhaps destined to regret for the whole of my life, farewell! All that I hold most dear is shut within you! Preserve that precious trust, and give it safely back to me some day! . . ." I stooped to kiss the threshold once again, and then hastened to rejoin my father. Mass was just ending. He guessed where I had been, but made no comment. We went down to the port, where we found Jean and Bertrand Mairat, Catherine and Edmée, Loiseau, Bourgoin and all the workmen, together with Gaudet, Burat, Baras-Dallis, Léger, Dhall, Colombat, Maufront, Tulout, etc.: in all more than fifty young men from different quarters of the town, who displayed so much affection for me that my estimable father was lost in admiration and surprise. "Ah, uncle," Edmée said to him, "you did not know how well my cousin, with his pleasant ways, got on with everyone, and how much he was liked." "Excellent, excellent, dear niece. He must inherit it from my honoured father." At my entreaty my friends did not come on to the boat, which they would have nearly filled. I took leave of my estimable father in front of them, and asked him to give my respects to my mother, and messages of affection to my brothers and sisters and to all my relatives. Then I reminded him of old M. Debierne. "I shall be seeing him in three hours," my father answered. "Nicolas, I shall never forget the happy moments that you have given me." "Ah, father, and perhaps they will be the only ones I shall ever give you, and yesterday will remain for you my wedding day!" "You do right to moderate my joy; it was too intense." These were the last words that we exchanged. My father turned away, with a mist in front of his eyes. But the mention of Debierne gave Tulout a chance to relate this incident to my friends and to tell my father the part which I myself did not know.

Just as the gangway was going to be lowered away, my heart leapt at the sight of Toinette running towards us. She came quickly on to the boat, and gave me some additional provisions for the journey; two partridges, three bottles of excellent wine, and some scones. I thanked the sweet girl in a rapture of joy, exclaiming: "Ah, it is the heart that counts . . . the heart of both . . . the heart of all three! . . ." Toinette hurried away, speechless, and the plank fell behind her. . . . From this moment, every bond with my dear Auxerre was broken, and my four years of happiness were at an end. . . . Bertrand had come on to the boat and was taking me as far as Bassou; Jean led my father away at once; the two wives remained upon the bank. As we moved away, I saw that the young men and the printers had surrounded my estimable father, and were treating him with every sign of respect; and later, I thought I descried Toinette speaking to him at the

Porte Saint-Nicolas. . . . "Look, look!" cried Bertrand. "How everyone respects my uncle!" I waved to Edmée, who was still standing on the bank; she answered with a sad gesture and it seemed to me that she wiped away a tear. So I too have been loved, and regretted; now no one cares what becomes of me. Ah, most unlucky, all those who loved me have been laid to rest before me! . . .

We threaded the straits; trees hid the port and town from my eyes; in a moment, I was a thousand leagues away! Two hours later we reached Bassou and my cousin left me. At last I was alone, and was glad of it; for now I could give myself up to all the thoughts that my changed position brought crowding to my mind.

You, Reader, who have followed me through this Fourth and fairest Epoch of my life, have you noticed how youth assumes that the fine offers made to it by Fate will be repeated and repeated? Young people, they are made but once! . . . Have you observed that all the losses I sustained were irreparable, though I, basking in fortune's smiles, had no suspicion of it? Ah, I should have profited by that period of good fortune, if only to set my feet upon the way towards an assured position. . . . I did not do so. . . . I counted on my friend . . . excusably though. . . . But fate, which up till now had spoilt me as one spoils an artless and sweet-natured child, was henceforward to treat me with a harsh severity. My spring-time is over; the scorching heat of a torrid summer is awaiting me. Autumn will follow after; then the winter; and then death!

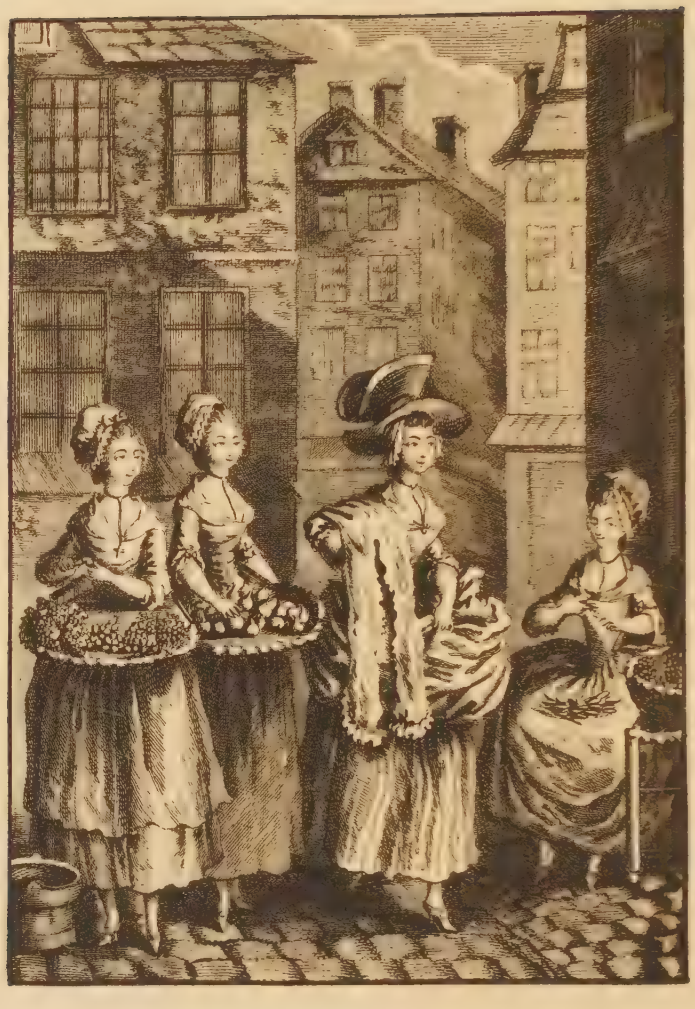
Labitur occulte, fallitque volatilis ætas,
Et celer admissis labitur annus equis! OVID, II. *Amor.* Eleg. 8 v. 49.

END OF THE FOURTH EPOCH

FIFTH EPOCH

MY SECOND STAY IN PARIS
I AM A
JOURNEYMAN PRINTER

1755-1759



FIFTH EPOCH

My Second Stay in Paris
I am a Journeyman Printer

1755 – 1759

> *Whate'er your ill, at fortune's direst end,*
> *See you avoid contempt of self, my friend.*
> My poem *de miis.*
>
> *Quis non e timidis ægri contagia vitet,*
> *Vicinum metuens ne trahat inde malum?*
> Ovid, *de Ponto.*

AUXERRE ceased to be my home on the 1st of September, 1755; Paris became my home on the 3rd; and with my first glimpse of the buildings my heart contracted.... Did I foresee what was to befall me there?* "O Paris," I exclaimed, "when shall I leave you to return to Her!" I was going to stay with my brother-in-law, the husband of Marie, my prettiest sister.

On the following day, the 4th, I went in search of my old comrade Boudard. He had been good for little but mischief when I had known him, and I was not depending on him much; so it was with some surprise that I found a lad six feet tall, grave and judicious of manner, kindly of speech, and, most important, of an obliging nature. He welcomed me with a brother's tenderness, and took possession of me at once, promising to introduce me to a good printer. He was working at the Galeries du Louvre, and it was a former comrade of his, Renaud, who had left Auxerre before I arrived, who had got him the place. He hoped to do the same for me; and nothing could have been better for me in my position; because the typography used there was in the purest taste. Herein it was much superior to Didot and those other printers who have culpably corrupted our orthography by suppressing the long *ſ*, which is so different, in its pronunciation, to the round *s*[*]; and also to such as Pierre, Prault, and all those other so-called craftsmen whom the ignorant extol. In the meantime Boudard, who was very busy, handed me over to a fellow-lodger of his, who took me round the town. He was boarding with Mme Lallemand, the pretty wife of a colleague, and he found me a room in the same house.

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*With his arrival in Paris a new page in Restif's life is turned. As Ivan Bloch remarks: "The excesses of Auxerre, with all the crudities and cynicism they were associated with, yet retained something healthy and natural. We now enter another and more poisoned atmosphere, in which an evil air of corruption and perversity is felt. Restif is no longer the Casanova of Auxerre, but, as he himself expresses it, 'a new Petronius'." [Ed.]

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[*] Thus, far from perfecting our orthography, they have spoilt it, by depriving us of a consonant which is pronounced like the soft *c* in *ce*, and only leaving us the softened *s*, as in *chose*, *rose*, *dose*, *raison*, etc., so that most children now speak of *vraizemblance*, *inzertion*, *zéduction*, etc. Who first thought of suppressing the long *ſ*? Dorat, the futile Dorat! This was the great man whom such as Didot were so eager to follow; and the stupid mob of printers and typefounders were equally eager to imitate the ignorant and unreflective Didot; so that we have now reached a point where the former refuse to make use of, and the latter to found, the long *ſ*. We have had proof of it in this book, for I have often been forced to use the round *s* incorrectly because Citizen Beaumarchais's typefounders, slavish partisans of Didot, refused to make the long *ſ*. . . . I am well aware that, even before Dorat and Didot, no one, except perhaps myself, had thought of making an intelligent distinction between the long *ſ* and the round *s*, the latter being used only at the end of a word; but why has not this intelligent distinction been adopted, when it was pointed out to, and approved by, Citizen Beaumarchais, and laid by him before the Académie, which approved of it also? Why has the stupidity and ignorance of such as Didot been joyfully accepted by everyone? There is a fatality in human affairs which inclines us to the absurd rather than towards the rational. . . . When I was printing Metastasio's cantilena quoted above, I realised that it was impossible to spell Italian without the long *ſ*, because the two *s*'s are even more strongly differentiated in this language than in our own. Thus such men as Didot not only maim their own language by their culpable and criminal hardihood, but make the whole nation ridiculous by their ignorance and lack of sense. Together with printers and founders they are the scourge of our orthography. The intentional irregularities in the orthography of this book are of no real importance; they will appear capricious only to those who cannot understand the principle underlying them.

I wrote the same day to Madame Parangon, enclosing a letter to Mlle Fanchette. I will not quote the letters; I was always very careful when writing to this lady.

Boudard was free on Sunday (the 7th) and kept me company all day. On the 10th I was given temporary employment at the Louvre, and next day I was promised something more permanent. On Sunday the 14th I saw Pollet of Sens, one of my old comrades at Auxerre; and the same day Caulette, that controller of the passenger boats who had caused me so much jealousy, gave me a packet from Madame Parangon and Mlle Fanchette. They were still together. I waited on M. Parangon at his mother's house. He received me coldly, though with a certain show of friendliness and offers of help in finding work, etc. I thanked him. The letters of Colette and of my little sweetheart were more flattering; in both I was exhorted *to love them, and to work at my craft and learn it thoroughly so as to become well known in it some day*. I was assured *of their enduring affection*, and they added that *my father had come to take leave of them, and that they had liked him even better than on the day before, so that now Fanchette would never call him anything but her second papa*. . . . Ah, I was very frivolous in those days, as we shall see . . . but so are all happy people.

On the same day I went to see my sister, and met her friend Mme Greslot, a very pretty woman and married from what I understood. I went halfway towards making love to her.

By the 22nd of September, Boudard, who had been working zealously on my behalf without saying anything about it, had succeeded with

Renaud's help in procuring me a place at the Louvre. It was here that I became acquainted with the latter, and had this been my only obligation to Boudard, it would have earned him all my gratitude.

On Sunday the 28th I wrote a general letter to all my friends in Auxerre and addressed it to Gaudet, as I meant to write personally to Loiseau. I gave it to Annette's cousin Bourdeaux, who punctually delivered it. I heard afterwards that this letter was read aloud three times in the ballrooms, to all the lads and girls who used to see me there, and Marianne Tangis was among them. . . . Dear people, I thank you for your affection! Alas, we have never come together again. . . .

In the afternoon one of my fellow-boarders took me to see his mistress, a pretty girl who lived in the Rue Saint-Martin. I had not yet collected myself after the turmoil and distress of my uprooting; I sought company and distraction because, no sooner was I alone, than tears rose involuntarily to my eyes and I wept. . . . Colette, Fanchette, Marianne, Rose, Annette, Ferrand, Ursule Meslot, Joséphine – I thought of them all with emotion, and a home sickness such as the Swiss experience filled my breast. So I tried to escape from myself. The mistress of *Armand*, my fellow-boarder, had a young friend called Mlle *Charlotte Merey*. I found Charlotte agreeable, but I did not want to become attached to her. Besides, everything considered, Mme Greslot attracted me more, and she seemed to like my pretty speeches. Whenever I visited my sister, she appeared as though by chance. . . . On leaving Armand, I went on alone to see my brother-in-law, and there I found this charming woman. We had a moment's private conversation, during which I told her frankly how very attractive I found her. She gave me a glance, which I could not interpret: austere or sad – I knew not which. . . . A moment after, she said: "Your sister often talks of you and it seems to me that she is excessively fond of you; she has often made us laugh with the story of what you said on your first visit to Paris. . . ." As she spoke to me with friendly familiarity, I repeated my declaration, adding: "But, Madame, you are married. . . . Therefore I shall behave with that restraint and respect which your ties exact. I will love you as a friend, if you will deign to permit this, and as such will cherish you without injury to your obligations or to mine, and without offence to God or man." "I was married against my will," she answered. "That is enough to tell you that I cannot and must not see you. The more pleasure I find in your society, the more I must abstain from it. Even while you were confessing your affection, I felt that I was in danger! Therefore never speak of it again. Let us meet as ordinary acquaintances, here and nowhere else; for I love what is right, although I detest my husband. I respect your sister; she has a feeling for religion and has always strengthened me; for she knows me as I do myself, save for what is in my heart . . . towards her brother. . . ." Thus artlessly did this amiable Parisian open her mind to me. Save for certain lapses, I was still an honest man, and Madame Parangon still lived; so I resolved to second her virtuous resolutions, and I protest that such was my sincere intention. . . . In the evening my sister heard that her husband was not coming in, so she kept Mme Greslot for supper, and I escorted her home at eleven o'clock. M. Greslot had not returned. I do not know how it happened, but . . . a caress . . . followed by a liberty . . . led to a complete surrender. I could not believe that it had really happened when I came to myself again. . . . This young woman had never had any children, but she was to have one.

I shall be told that, after my farewells to Madame Parangon, such a fall was hardly to be expected! . . . If I were writing a novel, yes, certainly it would clash both with morality and probability; but I am writing a book in which the course of the story is directed by facts. . . . I portray a man, not as he ought to have been, but as he was, carried away against his heart and reason by nature and the present object. The man who can resist a pleasure of the moment is rare and virtuous; the man who succumbs to it is just an ordinary, weak mortal.

On Sunday, the 5th of October, I heard some mention of my adventure with Mme Greslot. I do not remember how this happened, but I was very frightened, and dared not appear at my sister's house. . . . We shall hear later how my sister came to know about it. . . . As I had nothing else to do (for I had not yet become intimate with Renaud) I went again with Armand to see his mistress. Charlotte was there and a wide-awake little person called Mlle *Louise Lemaire*, who attracted me greatly. I had been paying court to her for about half an hour when a young jackanapes entered noisily, bawling out "Love painted me the picture," a song which had only just been published. The three girls were mad about the man, the tune and the words, and especially Louise, by whose side he established himself without any regard to my prior rights. I looked at him askance, but he paid no attention. Charlotte said: "You deserve it. Last is always best with you." I smiled, and kissed her hand. The young puppy sang his song, and I listened carefully because I wanted to learn it. When he had finished murdering the words and singing out of tune, I gave myself the pleasure of humbling him, and said drily: "You do not know it at all well." "Sing it better yourself then, if you can." "Yes, I will sing it." I had memorised it, and rendered the air with the tenderness proper to it, at the same time setting those lines to rights which the young imbecile had mangled:

MY VERSION

Love painted me the picture of Daphne and her misfortunes: I will trace their course, and may future generations listen and shed tears!

Daphne was beautiful and responsive, Apollo was handsome and hot-hearted; and Love, with one flirt of his wing, dropped a spark of his dangerous fire upon these two.

Amazed at first, Daphne sought to avoid Apollo; he approaches, and she retires; but does she flee swiftly? Love sees to it that she does not!

For this god wings in her train and commends her lagging steps; she poises, she wavers: modesty hastens her flight, but desire detains her.

He follows upon her track and is about to seize her; she begs for mercy as she goes. A Nymph is soon weary when she flees from pleasure!

(Here occurred a gap in the thread of the romance; so, desiring to make my coxcomb's ignorance more conspicuous, I interpolated two verses without much preparatory thought. The rhythm is very facile and lends itself to rhyme when the first harmony has been chosen. I found myself in difficulties, however, in the second verse, and was obliged to rhyme an infinitive with a past participle in the last line. These verses were applauded by the Beauties.)

Bathed in tears, she entreats the River of that place: "Ah, I beseech you, Peneus!" she cries in her distress. "Father, open your arms to me!"

"Dare you cast yourself into the waters?" answers the much moved River. "The God by whom the whole world sees, will seek you in vain in my deep places."

She leaps forward, but dare not. Her father sees her struggles and prevents her defeat by transforming her: but not at Daphne's own request.

She turns imploring to Apollo and the sight of him mitigates her pangs; she stretches her arms out to the friend whom she adores, and they change into branches.

What an object for the tender love of this unhappy victor! It is a laurel he embraces, but beneath the bark he clasps he feels a beating heart.

Nor is this heart unkind. If Love speaks truly, her last feelings were of reproach against her father and regret for her lover.

The Fop's Version*

Death *made me the* cincture *of* Dané *and her* misfortune: *I will* tell *the* picture, *and may future* rage carry flowers!

Dané *was beautiful and* peaceful, *Apollo was handsome and* visible; . . . *with one* cupel, shot *a spark of his* languorous *fire upon these two.*

Sudden *at first,* Dané *sought to avoid Apollo;* on the porch *she retires; but does she flee* so *swiftly? Love* swears *that she does not!*

For this God goes in pursuit *of her and commends her* bravery. *She wavers* at once, blushing marks *her flight, but* Love contracts *her.*

He conducts *her upon her track and is about to* hold *her; she* says *mercy as she* runs. *A* girl *is soon weary when she* smells *pleasure.*

(LACUNA)

She sighs *but dare not. Her father sees her* alases *and prevents her* perfection *by* metempsychosing *her;* Dané does not care!

She turns imploring by Pollo *and the sight of him* hardens *her pangs. Her arms* bear . . . *whom she* abhors . . . load with burdens. . . .

. . . *for* sadness . . . valorous . . . a stump . . . *a* floundering *heart.*

Nor is his heart angry. *Her last* sentiment made *Love speak truly, a reproach against her father, and* a kiss *for her lover.*

"Ah, you are right!" exclaimed Armand's mistress. "Now I can make some sense of it, and as Monsieur sang it I could make nothing out of it at all." "It seems to me," I then remarked, "that if one wants to give ladies a new song, and has adopted certain . . . mannerisms which suggest pretensions, one should at least know the words, and still more understand them and how to render them." "I did not consider that important," answered my young jackanapes. "But I have never heard the two verses you sang after *When she smells pleasure.*"† I admit that there was a touch of the coxcomb in my burst of laughter at this remark. I proceeded to turn every phrase he used to ridicule, and pursued him so ruthlessly with biting comments that Armand's mistress asked me in a whisper not to make things unpleasant for her. I immediately displayed all the complacence she could have desired, and this restored me in her good opinion and in Louise Lemaire's also. The latter had thought me a common blusterer, but after we had left, she said to her friend: "He may jeer at times, but he is polished and extremely well bred for all that. His behaviour after you spoke to him showed that he had been well brought up."

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*The humour, if any, derivable from a comparison of these two versions is, of course, lost in translation, since the fop's mistakes are due to his substituting words of more or less similar sound for those he has misheard. [Ed.]

†See *Drame de la Vie*, pp. 215-223.

On Thursday, Saint Denis's day, I heard that Louise had requested our spark to discontinue his visits. I asked after Mlle Charlotte, who was not present, and was told that she had returned to her own province. I thought I detected a plot between Armand and his mistress to foster an attachment in me for pretty Lemaire. I was conscious of my weakness and that I might form ties with this girl that it would be painful to break; so, as I wanted to keep my word to Mlle Fanchette, I went no more with Armand to his mistress. It is the only time in my life that I have stood firm against my inclinations; and then perhaps it was only because of my other inclination towards Mme Greslot, whom I dared not try to see again in my sister's house, and because of a dream I had on the night of Tuesday, October 21st, and Wednesday, October 22nd. I dreamt that I was with Madame Parangon, two years back, and that I was confessing my love for her. She listened with emotion, and then, taking a portrait from a pretty box, she said to me: "I will give you this portrait; it is of her whom you must love." "Ah, it is Mlle Fanchette!" I exclaimed. "It is she. It is my sister." "Madame, forgive me for having loved you. Henceforward I will love her and her alone." I prostrated myself before her, and kissed her pink shoes (the same that I had kept). "Yes, you must love her," she said, "love her for ever; for only my sister can make our affection for each other lawful. . . ." That was my dream, and the charm of a dream, when it is vivid, is stronger than that of reality. . . .

That same day, the 22nd, I heard that Jeannette Demailly was in Paris. I tried to find out where she lived, in order to talk with her about our friends in Auxerre, but at that time I did not succeed.

Here I must mention that, after I had entered the *Imprimerie Royale*, Boudard had suggested that we should leave Mme Lallemand, as her house was too far from our work, and take rooms in the *Hôtel du Saint-Esprit, Rue des Poulies*, with Chambon, a clockmaker who had just come from Auxerre. By the nature of his occupation, Chambon would be at home while we were at work and this would make it easy for us to arrange our meals: a *pot-au-feu* every other day and a roast from the oven in the evening. We shared the housekeeping between us; Boudard, as the most experienced, bought the meat at the butcher's; I took the meat to the bake-house, and told the cook when we were ready for it; also I bought the vegetables, the charcoal and the wood. Chambon put the pot-au-feu on the fire, and watched it; we washed up once a week, on Sunday after dinner. This arrangement worked perfectly until two women came to live in the little room next door to ours.* We spent three francs a week each on

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*When I saw that little play for the first time (at the *Italiens*), in which three young artists live fraternally with pretty *Bonne*, I remembered the Rue des Poulies, and said to myself: "My situation purified." Afterwards I thought that the author had combined the incidents of *Argeville* (or Argenville or Largeville) and *Jeannette*. As a matter of fact he had done neither the one nor the other, as he had never seen my manuscript. It is true that Fontanes and Joubert (Scaturin and Naireson) read it in 1784, but these men would never have recounted these two incidents. But why should not they have been duplicated, or why should not the author have invented them? Anything that is human may fall within the scope of the human imagination. . . . I have always had a bitter grudge against that vile profligate, the elder Fréron, the tool of civil and religious despotism for money's sake, for accusing *Voltaire* of plagiarising, because one or two old dealers in second-hand books have found a few dead phrases which bear some faint resemblance to the fresh and radiantly fertile thought of that Prince of Philosophers.

our food, which left us twelve to put aside, as a workman only earned fifty sous* a day at the Imprimerie Royale. The other fifty of the hundred allotted by the Government went into the Director's pocket; and as he made us work for him privately as well, he amassed an immense fortune! This man was one of the Lyons Anissons of whom Guy Patin speaks. He has married his daughter, or rather a dowry of fifteen hundred thousand francs, together with a trousseau worth four hundred thousand, to the Marquis de Lambert. The Marquise's brother has now (1784) taken his father's place as Director. He is a fool, and avaricious to the point of cruelty: he has turned the Imprimerie Royale (now the Imprimerie Nationale) into a jail, wherein the workmen are shut up to be released like animals at feeding time. If the father made about four millions, his son should make ten by his methods of conducting business. But why are the workmen so servile as to let themselves be muzzled by the tyranny of contemptible underlings? They were free in my time: my neck is not scarred by the chains of slavery! . . . (Things have greatly changed since 1784. Anisson mounted the guillotine in 1794, and the workmen have become intolerably insolent: *Medio tutissimus ibis.*)

It was from Chambon that I learned of Jeannette Demailly's arrival; he knew her address, but it was a freak of his to keep it from me.

On Sunday the 26th I was feeling irritated at the clockmaker's stubbornness, and when Armand came to see us, I was weak enough to let him take me to visit his mistress. Louise Lemaire came in a moment after us, and she assumed a little air of authority with me such as Rose had used; already she felt sure of her conquest. But her manner displeased me so much that I made a pretext to leave the house, and did not return again; I went to see my sister, and there I found Mme Greslot. Apart from the fact that my eyes spoke so clearly for my heart that my sister and brother-in-law could read their language, my sister told me that the young woman, repenting of her fault, had confessed it to her. *Victoire Scofon* (Mme Greslot's maiden name) told me, in the presence of M. and Mme Beaucousin, that she had fallen in love with me at first sight, in spite of herself, and as a result of her fond affection for my sister; but that in future she would avoid any chance of meeting me, although, on this occasion, she had lacked the strength to do so. . . . As a matter of fact we had only one more interview, in the course of which I learned that she was pregnant. Now that I was sure she loved me, I realised the danger of ruining this attractive woman and myself with her, for my sister knew of the affair, and thence it would soon reach the whole family; so I mastered my passion sufficiently to write this letter:

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*Twenty-four sous sometimes went to the old French livre, which roughly corresponded to the English shilling, but in Restif's time the "livre" was becoming a "franc." [Ed.]

To MADAME GRESLOT

> *Accept my sacrifice of the pleasure I find in seeing you: for I offer it at the altar of your happiness and your virtue. Yes, I immolate myself for you, Madame. I am convinced that happiness and duty are inseparable, and therefore I feel that if I try to win you over to my fond tenderness, I am not so much your lover as your most cruel enemy. It is some comfort to me that you at any rate have nothing with which to reproach yourself. But believe me, Madame, that if I could have contributed to your happiness by remaining faithfully attached to you, I would constantly have offered you the homage of my heart and all myself. You were dear to me before, but in this moment of renunciation, you are dearer still; were it mere passion that I felt, I should remain your lover; but the exalted emotions you inspire drive me from your presence; though your sweet image will live for ever in my heart."*

After this display of virtue, time hung heavy on my hands and I was very unhappy! I knew no one; I had lost all taste for study with my change of residence; so I fell back on my work, and that was the limit of my activities. I began to live like a machine, working all the week and resting on Sunday. With my arrival in Paris, or a little while before that, began those twelve fine years of my life during which I neither developed my mind nor furthered my career. Those twelve disastrous years, which I completely lost, decided my fate and my place in life. . . . So I moped (if the term may be permitted) and never went out to enjoy myself, although I had had a black suit made for the purpose. But I had not yet discovered the theatres, so I stayed in our room while my fellow-boarders went out to amuse themselves. My sweetest occupation was to go over in my notebooks all that had happened in the preceding years, and to recall my pleasantest times and those whom I had loved. First and foremost came Colette; I was back in the days when I had talked to her, and tears flowed down my cheeks. I was more faithful to her absent than when I had been able to speak to her every day. When I came to those conversations I have quoted, so deeply graven in my heart that their memory can never be effaced, I cried aloud. But she was still alive, and I believed that I should see her again some day and be her brother; therefore my tears were sweet. "Divinest creature," I exclaimed, "I have left your side and am deprived of the blessing of your presence; but I carry you always in my heart! . . . Sweet Fanchette, some day I shall adore you too! . . ."

But time was passing, dear Reader; it was flying, and the fatal scythe was poised, ready to cut the fair flower which was my life's adornment! . . . Already my good fortune was but a thing of the imagination, for never again was I to see Colette, who alone could make it real! . . . What power divided us? The Eternal Justice that wills not that its laws should be broken with impunity! . . . Why should I weary you, Reader, with the empty years that follow? Alas, let us leave out this period when I existed without living! You will learn nothing from it, see nothing, but my nonentity! Without force or energy, a mere workman concerned with the mechanism of my trade, and learning just so much about booksellers as to enable me to deal with them in the future, I lost my personality and everything that distinguished me from the common run of young men. And yet I shall find people to commend me for it! . . . But what am I thinking about? What right have you, poor wretch, to suppress anything? Strip yourself, and stand forth naked! Were you as empty and greedy as a *Lineveru*, as foolish and wicked as a *Lyniærre*, you must display all your shame! . . .

On the 30th of November, I finished my *Fastes*, or at least all I ever did of them. I described my farewells to my Auxerre friends; I enshrined the memory of sweet Marianne, I mentioned Rose, and expressed the worship that was due to Madame Parangon. I sang your praises too, my amiable Fanchette, whom never, even in the inmost recesses of my heart, have I dared to reproach. I did not deserve you; only your sister could have made me worthy of you. . . . Oh, how truly was that estimable woman attached to virtue. . . . She loved me, I am sure of it; yet she advised me to go to Paris, and this because I held but the second place in her heart; virtue was before me. O my Colette, whom I still adore after thirty-nine years of separation, for whom I still feel an ardent tenderness, more ardent even, perhaps, than when we said farewell! I feel it still, I repeat . . . then take away the love that guides my pen, and I shall not repeat myself again! Ay, take away my soul, my life; for only so shall I cease to talk about Colette. . . . My pen refuses to continue. . . . What is it that it has to write, and you to follow step by step, my Reader? My degradation. "Then why describe it?" Because I am writing the life of a man, not of an angel. . . . Where was I? At the 30th of November.

Next day I received a letter from my friend Loiseau and one from Colombat, who, feather-headed as he was, had not forgotten me. Also one from my brother Charles who wanted to come to Paris as a notary's clerk, or *saute-ruisseau** as they are called. I have lost these three letters.

On the 8th of December I wept over the memory of my conversation with Madame Parangon on that day in 1752. On the 11th I had a letter from Gaudet, and on the 23rd another from Loiseau. On the 26th I went to see my sister Margot and there met Mlle Destroches of Sens, an amiable young person.

On the 1st of January, 1756 (1755 is already left behind!), I wrote to my father. On the 4th I made the acquaintance of a certain Mlle *Carpentier*. On the 6th I wrote to my Courgis brothers and to my friend Loiseau. Then I re-read my note books with emotion. I wept. The heart is more prone to go astray when it is moved.

On the 11th . . . I pause dismayed. . . . Puritans, put down this book! . . . Read no more of it, implacable puritans; I desire neither your esteem, your approbation, nor your pity, for I know no one in the world, save murderers, more vile and dangerous than you! I set the prostitute above you; for she at least gives pleasure sometimes, but you bring nothing but bitterness, suffering and despair. . . .† But you, my frank, indulgent, sympathetic Readers, read on and pity me; see how a man may err and shed tears of compassion for him. . . . For I was as good, sincere and virtuous as you, but little by little I went astray . . . and I have been cruelly punished! Wise and far-seeing fathers, read this life to your children, and say to them: "See how Nicolas went astray and brought unhappiness upon himself through vice! He had a good heart, yet he was ruined through yielding too easily to lustful inclinations! Tremble, my children! You may not be as good as he, and yet he failed. Tremble, even if you are his equals, for you may become as vicious as he was." Oh, my tears, my tears! They blind me so that I cannot see, and the shapeless characters my hand is tracing are hardly legible even to myself! . . .

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*A lawyer's clerk, being frequently sent out on messages, is still nicknamed in France a *saute-ruisseau* or gutter-jumper. [Ed.]

†I have said it once and I repeat it: if virtue does not make for happiness and pleasure, then let it be abhorred. A puritan's virtue is detestable, nought but privation, suffering and intolerance, with no recompense save pride. . . . I curse it.

On that for ever fatal day, the 11th of January, 1756, I visited my first prostitute for the price of a crown. May you be for ever cursed, unhappy day! I was punished immediately, and first by *Argeville's* contempt: I paid her, therefore I was a muff; if I had behaved like a blackguard, ordered her, brought her to heel with a beating and paid her with a kick in the belly, I should have been a fine fellow, a buck. Followed the most cruel period of anxiety for my health. . . . This prostitute was one of the two women who had come to live in the little room next door to ours: the crapulous Chambon made the acquaintance of these creatures in our absence, and introduced them to us as neighbours at supper. Chambon was one of those vacuous things which can neither think nor feel; he lacked the strength necessary for debauch, and made up for this privation by the obscenest conversation; he seemed to enjoy exciting others to do what he could not do himself. Although Boudard was tall, he was only moderately virile and was naturally little attracted by women; and for this reason he was not much affected by their morals or by Chambon's behaviour. He himself was as decent in speech, as Chambon was shameless. It was a very different matter for me, with my ardent senses, my fiery temperament and my iron constitution. From the very first evening, the 10th of January, I could not see Argeville without desire. The women had supper with us, and afterwards Chambon gratified his favourite tastes, by indecent gestures and conversation so filthy that one of the women rebuked him, even though she had admitted her profession. Argeville had a beautiful face. It appeared that these women had been living in a decent house, but their profession had been discovered and arrangements made for them to be consigned to Saint-Martin and the hospital. However, a police spy, whom they paid according to custom, warned them in time to avoid this calamity by not returning home. They never came until late in the evening to their little closet, which had no chimney and no window save on to the corridor, and should really only have been used as a place for storing our wood. In the course of the evening the youngest of the two women roused a tumult of desire in me, and, finding her alone next day, I made a proposal and it was accepted. . . . How different from other similar experiences! Argeville treated me as a neighbour, not as a casual stranger, and used all the arts of her profession; I was intoxicated. But let us turn away our eyes from this picture. The two women did not stay long in the house; but their short sojourn sowed disunion in our little company. Each of us wanted exclusive possession of Argeville, although we knew her trade and that she practised it during the day. She used all her art to conceal from each the favours that she granted to the other two, but everything came out because no one would have anything to do with her companion. Then it was agreed that they should sleep with us in turn; but Boudard, who was the second to have Argeville, would never let her share the clockmaker's bed afterwards, on the grounds that he was unhealthy. As Argeville did not like Chambon, she strongly supported this accusation, and we agreed that thenceforward she should sleep between Boudard and me, while Chambon had her friend to himself. Chambon had to be content with this; but peace only lasted for twenty-four hours, and next evening hostilities began again. Argeville got into our bed; Chambon tried to pull her out of it, and they started fighting. I was obliged to interfere because it was my turn for her; and Boudard took my side, because he had been the one to suggest the arrangement. He threw himself on the clockmaker, exclaiming: "The ugly one is yours, and the pretty one is ours! That is the agreement!" Chambon said he would leave us. We took him at his word, and we parted the day after this scandalous scene. The clockmaker had come to Paris with a new method of gilding watches; it had not succeeded because it was no good, so he went back to Auxerre and there divulged our profligate manners. Luckily for both of us, but especially for me, he was such a liar ordinarily that no one believed him, even though he was telling the truth. Moreover, the very excess of our debauchery made it difficult for the ladies of Auxerre even to conceive of it. As Boudard and I could not arrange to live together as before, we parted good friends; and I returned to Mme Lallemand, who had moved to the *Rue Saint-Julien le Pauvre.* I left the Imprimerie Royale, as I found that I was a clever enough workman to earn almost double elsewhere, and went to *Claude Hérissant,* Rue Notre-Dame. But before describing this man and my relations with him, which were strange enough, I must continue my personal adventures before and during this change.

On leaving Boudard, I learned that young Demailly's honour was very much exposed, and, as I had a room to myself, I resolved to help her to the best of my ability. We have heard that I had made her acquaintance in

Auxerre, and that I had an esteem for her; furthermore, she was a friend of Marianne Tangis and Ursule Meslot, and of other girls whom I held in fond remembrance. She was an orphan and came of an honoured family; but her uncle had just died intestate, and two inhuman aunts had made use of certain ancient laws to deprive their brother's orphan of her share in the heritage, though her name gave her a better and more sacred right to it than they. I was still not without virtue in spite of what has just been read (for Madame Parangon still lived), and I felt that I could love her as a sister. So I called on Mme *Hizette*, the pretty young wife of a retail jeweller on the *Quai de l'Horloge*, only to find that she had been obliged to dismiss Jeannette, because her husband became too visibly amorous of her. She spoke well of young Demailly, whom I called my sister, and told me she was now living with compatriots of hers at the *Pont-aux-Choux*. Here I found her and very unhappy, as slight acquaintances show small consideration for a penniless orphan. So heedless youth and artless innocence put their heads together and decided that Jeannette should come and live with me. And we carried out our plan that very evening. Jeannette told her hosts that she had found a place; her trunk was brought down; I was waiting for her at the door with a cab, and no one asked with whom she was going away. We settled down at once in my little room, and lived together as brother and sister (had things been otherwise, I would say so). I had only one little bed, and we slept in it together for the first three nights without the slightest impropriety. But after that, feeling the physical urge towards a girl I could not marry (as I thought), I put a mattress on the ground and slept there covered with a single blanket, though Jeannette protested and wanted to take it for herself. "Your work is harder than mine," she said, "and you are tired. I only do needlework." "But I am stronger than you, and the pleasure of being near you and knowing that you are not uncomfortable gives me sweet sleep. My happiness is in your well-being and in your virtue, sister." Every evening when we were in bed and ready to go to sleep, we would say to each other: "Good-night, little brother." "Good-night, dear little sister." And we slept all through the night.

I was at work during the day, and Jeannette was alone in our room. At first she attended to my needs, mending my clothes and preparing our meagre food. Later she worked for dressmakers or furriers. When I came home, I gave her just one brotherly kiss, and then we chatted amicably. It was a very pleasant life. . . . Ah, how I have regretted it since! Jeannette told me that she had never been so happy, and had it not been for my marriage prospects, it would have lasted for a long time, perhaps for ever. Jeannette was as pretty a girl as one could see, even in Paris. But I was afraid of gossip, and lest an appearance of misconduct might give pain to Madame Parangon.

At the end of a week Jeannette made the acquaintance of a little neighbour. Mme Leprince was an unfortunate young woman who had run away from a bad husband: she lacked even the necessities of life, because she could not see to work in the furnished room for which she paid four francs a month. On the first day of their acquaintance, Jeannette invited her to work in ours. Thinking we were brother and sister, little Leprince exclaimed: "Do you sleep together?" "No, he has a mattress on the floor and one of the blankets," answered Jeannette. "We are not very well off: my brother works, but he has expenses and we save where we can." "As a matter of fact," answered Leprince, "I have seen a whole family in bed together in my father's house – father, mother, a daughter of sixteen, and two boys of eighteen and twenty." When I came back for dinner, the young woman noticed how friendly we were and how unloverlike, and remarked: "Now I can see that you really are brother and sister, although they doubt it in the house; besides you are like each other." (Jeannette had an aquiline nose like mine.) "I shall re-assure our hostess." In the evening little Leprince came in to see us go to bed, and next day I found her waiting for me when I went to work. "I was afraid of being indiscreet before your sister; but I can speak to you. I would like to offer her half of my bed, which is big enough for two." "Ah, Madame," I said, kissing her hand, "I owe you a thousand thanks, and I accept." This prompt acceptance brought me great credit. The little woman came down with me to see Mme Lallemand, by whom she was much esteemed for her good behaviour; not that Mme Lallemand was well behaved, but she liked pretty women and was as jealous for them as a lover; therefore she was delighted when all suspicion concerning Jeannette was removed. However, Jeannette was no game for her. Leprince praised my sister and myself most highly. We agreed that Jeannette should sleep with her, and I was really delighted as I neither wanted to harm an orphan's reputation nor jeopardise myself by indiscretion. It was lucky that we took these precautions, for the news soon reached Auxerre that Jeannette was living with me, and I was obliged to get my hostess and little Leprince to write to Madame Parangon, and to Jeannette's aunts, who, having robbed her, would not have been displeased to justify their infamous procedure by stealing her honour also. This obliged me to confess the truth to these two women, who, realising the chastity of my conduct and Jeannette's goodness, thought me a model, and wrote such a fine testimonial to my character that it carried conviction. . . . Madame Parangon sent me an unsigned letter, in which she said: *"My friend, slander attacked you, but even had it been* *true, it would not have changed my mind towards you. Yet how sweet to me that it is a slander! . . .*" Jeannette's aunts also wrote to thank me, and on this occasion virtue had its reward.

My position at this time was not unhappy; yet, while I was protecting Jeanette's innocence and displaying the properest feelings to Mme Leprince, whom I was trying to re-unite with her husband, I abandoned my body from time to time to the caresses of unfortunate women. Lured by the seasoned pleasure I had found with Argeville, I profaned my being, and outraged nature with them. . . . Finally (and let us marvel at the logic of the passions!), having learned from Boudard and an Avignonais named *Bétigny* that they had had our hostess, who was severe on others but had few scruples for herself, I thought it would be a prudent thing to give her exhaustive proof that I had not possessed Jeannette. One evening in the early days, when my sister was still sleeping in my room, I heard a noise at our door in which we had left the key. I listened attentively; I heard the handle turn; then someone stumbled against the foot of my mattress and began feeling about to see whether I was on it alone. Having made sure of this, the investigator caressed me, waiting for the first word that I should utter. . . . "Who is it? who is there?" I said in a low voice, holding hard to the woman who had fingered me. Mme Lallemand had been forced to tell her name, and to confess that the motive of her visit was a curiosity to know whether I slept with the girl I called my sister. I let her go. But having found out how things were, she came again on the pretext of seeing whether I were not in bed with my sister. This time I refused to be her dupe, and told her straightly that she had entered my room with her master key, as she used to do with Bétigny. . . . At the name Bétigny, she begged me to keep silence; and, as she had no more need to be careful now that I knew about her worst adventure, she behaved like a Messalina. The proof that she had reached her goal lay in the fact that she came again several times, though assuring me that she only did so to protect the virtue of Jeannette and Mme Leprince.

As Jeannette was no longer supposed to be my sister, it was assumed that she was to be my wife and that that was why I had been so careful of her virtue. Little Leprince, whom I had at last managed to re-unite with her husband, mentioned this to me, and I was obliged to tell her that it was impossible while I was a minor. . . . Thus I left others to hope; but I was in honour bound to tell Jeannette the truth, at the same time impressing on her the importance of keeping it to herself until she had found a place, or a good match.

After the departure of little Leprince, Jeannette kept on her room just for sleeping. We were still watched; but our exact observance of the proprieties and our frank affection, which held no flavour of love, guarded us from our hostess's evil tongue; for women of that sort are as free with their tongues as with the rest. On the contrary, this woman went about telling everyone: "They are not brother and sister save by their birthplace; but they love each other as honestly as though they were the same flesh and blood. These two young people touch and interest me as no one has ever done before; I do not know what I would not do for them. . . . They have known each other since childhood: now they help each other as brother and sister. . . . But the innocence of their behaviour! I would like you to see them, neighbour." And often the neighbours would come to take a peep at us from the staircase while we were at dinner or supper. I never went out or came in again without kissing Jeannette as a brother, and when it was time to go to bed, she always kissed me good-night. "Good-night, dear friend, good-night," I would say tenderly, and she would answer: "Sleep well, dear Nicolas, for you have to work hard!" . . . Often we would say: "Goodbye, brother!" "Goodbye, sister!" but never did the slightest freedom intrude on our caresses. The manner of our lives together became common property through our hostess, who was pleased enough to use our virtue to patch up her tattered reputation, and finally it brought Jeannette good luck.

A rich merchant of the Rue Saint-Antoine, a childless widower of about fifty, was looking for a decent girl for his shop. He was acquainted with our hostess, and came to see her one Sunday in March (it was the third Sunday in Lent). Jeannette and I were just going out, and, struck by her beauty, the merchant asked who she was. At this moment Jeannette asked me: "Did you bring the umbrella, brother?" "Listen," said the gossip Lallemand to her former lover. "I have forgotten it, sister," I answered. "I will go up and fetch it." "No, no," she said, running upstairs, "you are tired, and I do nothing but sit all day." The merchant watched us attentively. She came down just as I was bowing to Mme Lallemand, and she smiled at the latter in the charming way which made her so attractive. She was of an exquisite cleanliness. I took the umbrella; she wanted to carry it and in her soft voice disputed the point, with tender childlike phrases such as a girl uses with those she loves. She exchanged greetings with everyone in our little street as we set forth. I will describe our excursion presently. One way or another the 21st of March was to influence Jeannette's future.

When we had gone, our hostess, always eager to get credit for our virtue, and especially with a man who knew her own to be somewhat doubtful, said: "Those are two of my lodgers." "They are brother and sister, from what I understand? It is a pleasure to see them together!" "Ah, I believe you!" And at once she told the whole story as she knew it. "But is it really true?" he asked. "So true that all the neighbours will tell you the same, and they are always spying on them. It is a miracle of honest friendship! . . . And the girl is so pretty!" "Pretty? She is beautiful," exclaimed the merchant. "Oh, don't excite yourself about her! She is not for you nor for anyone else." "Perhaps, after I have a little more information . . . I will see that you are not the loser, old friend; but if what you say is true, and she is willing, I have found what I am looking for: a decent and attractive girl to put at the head of my house. I will provide for her future at the end of a few years, on condition that she does not leave me." Mme Lallemand preferred that Jeannette rather than anyone else should deprive her of certain of the old man's attentions, as she was sure of the girl's virtue; so she praised her more than ever and made the neighbours confirm her statement. . . . The merchant was convinced.

In the meantime Jeannette and I walked along the Boulevard du Temple, and as she had not seen her hosts of the Pont-aux-Choux since the day she left them with me, we called there. They received us coldly, though they were polite enough to me, so we only stayed a little while, and then went for a walk towards Haute-Borne. At the corner of a lonely street two or three boys of about fourteen or fifteen stared at Jeannette with admiration: "Oh, what a pretty mistress he has!" they exclaimed. "He must love to caress her!" Jeannette turned as red as a rose, and this made her even more beautiful. . . . At this moment we turned into the Grand'rue de la Courtille, and a carriage containing two men and two women halted beside us; the occupants lowered the windows and stared at Jeannette. "She is charming," said the men. "She has a . . . quaint prettiness," said the women. . . .

Jeannette looked no more than a little work girl, although she was in a silk dress; and I was wearing a heavy green bergopzom coat, with frogs and tassels and big bear cuffs, and a belt of the same fur; if I had had a large flat moustache, I should have looked like a coachman to a good family. One of the ladies called me: "M . . . n . . . am . . . M . . . onsieur! Is that young girl your wife?" "She is my sister, Mam'selle or Madame." "Ah! what does she do?" "Madame, we have come from the Provinces, and at the moment my sister is sharing my little bachelor apartment." "Are you domestics?" "No, Madame; I am a printer, and my sister is a milliner." "Does she want a place?" "Faith, Madame, that is our one desire; a good place for . . . we come of an honest family, and are self-respecting." "He expresses himself well!" said the other lady. "Can you dress the hair?" "Yes, Madame," answered Jeannette. "What a beautiful voice!" one of the men whispered to the other. "She is just what we want," said the ladies to each other. "Would you care to enter the service of a young lady of quality, who is in a convent?" "Yes, Madame," answered Jeannette blushing, and I continued: "If Mesdames will be so kind as to mention their address, I will bring my sister to wait on them to-morrow." "That is well thought of. . . . At the Hotel Richelieu to-morrow, at eleven o'clock," said one of the men, "and if you will tell me where you live I will send my carriage for you." "There is no point in doing that," said one of the ladies quickly, and this made me withhold the information. As they went away, they said: "She really is very pretty."

"We will see whether that suits you in every respect," I said to Jeannette. "I put myself entirely in your hands," she answered. "No one here takes any interest in me except you, and as you have taken the place of a brother to me, it is right that you should have a brother's authority." I wanted

Jeannette to find a place in spite of our pleasant life together, because I was not easy with regard to Fanchette, Madame Parangon and M. Collett. . . . We had a little meal of fried carp at a cookshop, and I noticed that we were left shut up together for nearly three-quarters of an hour: apparently these people were accustomed to receive couples of opposite sex, and were ready to oblige in any way to attract custom. We did not return home until seven o'clock.

I was just going downstairs to consult Mme Lallemand as to what we had better do next day about the ladies we had met, when she came into our room. "I have good news for you!" she exclaimed. "I have found a place for your sister, and perhaps a permanent establishment. I spoke for you as you deserved, and the rest will depend on her and you." She described the mercer's offer in detail, dwelling on all its advantages. I preferred this proposal to the other; as for Jeannette, she had no will in the matter. . . . I spoke of our meeting. "On no account take her there!" cried our hostess. "I have been a chambermaid and I know what it is: if the mistress herself does not play the fool with a pretty girl like that, the master, the steward, the butler, the valet, and even the lackeys will attack and fumble her, and sometimes a poor girl is raped. . . ." (I saw that she was exaggerating things to put us off.) "No," she continued, "that will only be useful to impress the mercer, and you may trust me to make the most of it. . . ." It seemed that everyone took as much interest in our small affairs as though they had been ourselves. I have marvelled since how they all collaborated to rid me of a girl who was pretty, gentle, and obliging – a perfect character. It was as though Fate feared to leave me any refuge against misfortune, and the time for this was advancing upon me with giant strides: Colette had but one more year to live! . . .

Next day we had a visit from the mercer. Jeannette was alone when he arrived, escorted by our hostess, and was engaged on mending my clothes, as she always devoted the first day of the week to me. "That is how you will always find her," said Mme Lallemand. "Mademoiselle's modesty is more eloquent than anything that could be said in praise of her," replied the mercer. Jeannette was wearing a plain white mob cap, a silk neckerchief that had belonged to her mother, and a blue satin bodice and skirt, enchantingly remodelled by herself from the remains of an old dress; cotton stockings with red clocks, and some little sabots, ornamented on the toes and well lined, which I had bought her the evening before at the Palais. Everything about her was so clean and tasteful that she looked charming. The mercer was astonished! . . . He talked alone with Jeannette until I came in for dinner. The hostess warned me as I passed, so I went upstairs quietly. When I reached the door, my sister was saying: "What you say is very proper, Monsieur, but I cannot feel flattered by it, because my brother behaves with such unfailing and generous propriety that any indulgence in that matter would be an insult to him." "All your answers show intelligence as well as goodness, Mademoiselle; but why do you still call him your brother, when you have admitted that he is not so?" "That is true; but I am the only daughter of two unfortunate people who loved each other tenderly; my mother died of grief when she lost her husband. I was left an orphan, and had no one in the world here, until . . . my brother found me. This young and virtuous fellow-countryman of mine had known and respected me in our town; and my family also, especially my uncle the canon who was an intimate friend of his brother, the Curé of Courgis. He heard that I was here and . . . in service, and his generous heart was filled with indignation. He came in search of me: 'Is it really

Mademoiselle Demailly whom I see in such a position! You know me; you have heard of my brother the Curé of Courgis, and that he and all my family bear an excellent reputation. I am engaged to someone else and shall not betray her, so come with me, and I will be your brother and you shall be my sister, and all that I have or earn will belong to both of us.' I went with him. And this excellent young man has gone beyond all that he promised in his consideration and respect for me. He has been a real brother, so why should I not still give him that name? Ah, and he is my only brother, and for some time he has been all the family I have. I shall keep a sister's heart for him to the day of my death!" On that I could contain myself no longer, but threw myself into my little friend's arms, exclaiming: "If I were not pledged to Virtue herself, you would cease to be my sister to become my wife." Then I saluted the mercer, who suggested that I should dine with him, Jeannette and our hostess. I accepted, and he went downstairs to inform Mme Lallemand while I dressed. "My dear sister-friend, this mercer seems an honest man. And think, sweet little sister, if we had been wicked and lived immorally, should we have dared to raise our eyes to him?" They were listening, for Mme Lallemand had come back with the mercer to fetch us, and on opening the door I found them in an attentive attitude. . . . They wanted Jeannette to come as she was, and her beauty lost nothing by it.

It was a very pleasant dinner. . . . The mercer warned us in the carriage to behave as brother and sister, and directly we sat down to table, he said to the old cook who served us: "This is your new mistress; you will obey her as you obey me." "Ah, I suspected as much when I saw you go out this morning, after what you said in your sleep last night." "Why, what did I say?" "You said: 'Assuredly if she is like that, I shall marry her! She will be a treasure! Yes, yes, a treasure!' That is what you said in your sleep, from which I concluded that you were going to get married." The mercer's only answer was a smile. . . . We left Jeannette in her new home, and I was very much surprised on our return to see that her luggage had already been sent to the mercer's. "The trunk was behind our carriage," said our hostess, laughing. "What you were saying as we came upstairs decided the mercer. And so that the cook shall be in no doubt on the matter, he will give her, by Jeannette, her present for the wedding this evening." I was transported with joy! Fool! I rejoiced in everything that should have afflicted me! . . . When he came to know Jeannette's full value, her goodness and her economy, the mercer conceived a well-founded respect for her, and married her after she had been with him for six months.

Alone and isolated, my only satisfaction that I had contributed to my friend's happiness, I was delivered over for a time to the lubricity of the salacious Lallemand; but her crapulous infidelities and her taste for women drove me from her. I sought distraction, sometimes in my craft and sometimes by making acquaintances among the booksellers. I grew very intimate with *Ganneau,* a rich bookseller, newly widowed, and he offered me a position. I was in doubt whether to accept, but my Paris friends persuaded me against it, and thereby possibly lost me a fortune. For this bookseller had an only daughter aged six, an ugly child, who has since married, unhappily for her, the notary *Lafresnaie.* In view of the friendship which this new Pombelins displayed towards me, he might well have been my refuge when misfortune overtook me.

I used to go and see Jeannette, but never alone: I made my sister Geneviève (the Ursule of the *Paysan*, by a fusion of her story with that of Ursule Rameau) accompany me. Also Geneviève would often go without me, and thus each of the two girls found a good friend. Gaudet, who had just arrived in Paris, fell passionately in love with my sister. Jeannette told me about it, but my friend had as yet no position, and my youngest sister was not seventeen; so I spoke to them and they seemed to appreciate my point of view. But they kept out of the way of Jeannette and me, and, without meaning any harm, my friend corrupted my sister. . . . It is a fact that he meant no harm and that he wanted to marry Geneviève, even after she had been seduced and violated by her Confessor Dusautoir and was pregnant by him; he would have done so had not my brothers of Courgis shut up the unfortunate girl in Pélagie, and kept her there for eight years. . . . Thus we see the foundations of the *Paysan-Paysanne pervertis* in this book: the facts were romanticised to make a novel, but they were true at bottom. Let us return a little.

I saw Boudard from time to time. I had been with young Demailly for some time (though I kept this a secret from him) when he suggested taking me to the *Français*. It was on Sunday the 1st of February, and we saw *Le Méchant* and, I think, *La Pupille*. I was enchanted, and thenceforward the theatre took the place of every other pleasure – save women.* However I did not revisit it until after I had parted from Jeannette. When my friend Gaudet arrived a week later, with that *Bourdignon*, who afterwards appropriated the last moments and the cash-box of my father-in-law, Réné

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*Restif's enthusiasm for the theatre finds its most complete expression in *La Mimographe ou le Théâtre Reformé* (1770) which contains much of interest. He combats the conventionalism of the stage in his day and pleads for realism. Contrary to the common opinion of his time, he expresses great admiration for Shakespeare. He was opposed to music-drama as an attempt to speak three languages at the same time, but much approved the ballet and desired to develop it. As we should expect, he strongly upholds the moralising influence of the stage, promoting virtue and warning against vice, and even regards immoral plays as a useful outlet by which evil passions are expressed and rendered harmless. [Ed.]

Lebègue, I took them to my dear Français. Gaudet did not much enjoy it, whereas I could not have enough of this amusement; the rising of the curtain was a most delicious moment! . . . Geneviève came to see me before the theatre, and we took her to call on Jeannette; I had not dared to introduce them while Jeannette was living with me. It was thus that Gaudet made my sister's acquaintance. Afterwards he used to wait for her alone; for I never missed going to the theatre: I would have liked to go there every day. But before my sister Margot noticed the meetings between Gaudet and Geneviève, and, to put a stop to them, placed our young sister with some pious ladies in the *Rue des Cinq-Diamants*, I made some acquaintances in the house where she was working in *Rue Denis*, near *Sauveur*.

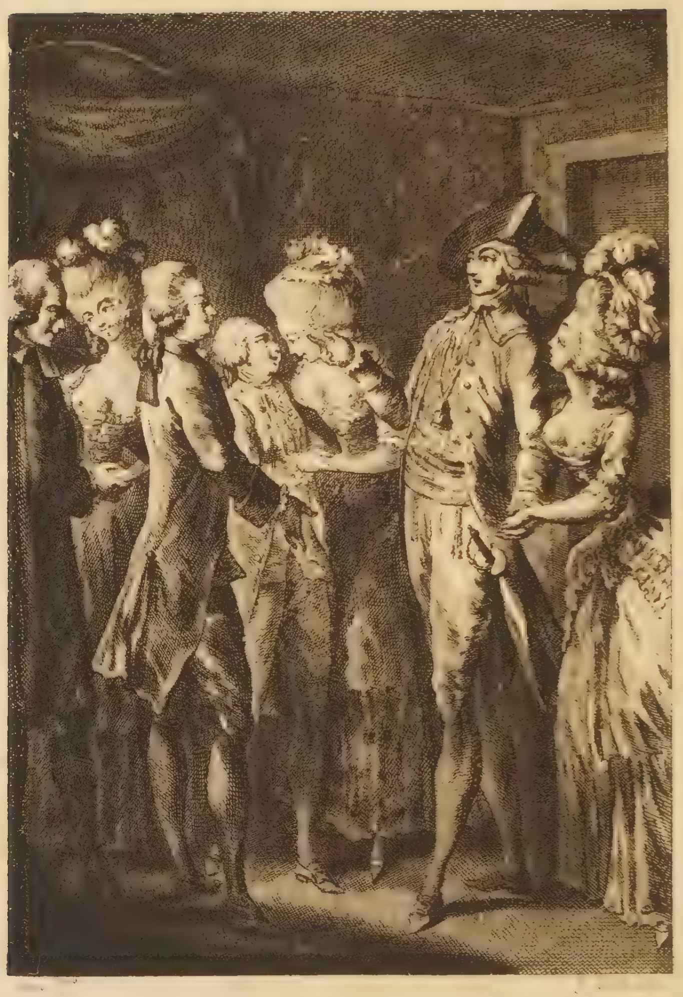
One of Geneviève's fellow-workers was a charming brunette, called *Agathe Fagard,* whom I could have loved had I been free. But, as my sister's friend, I was frank with her, even while paying her attentions, and when we discovered that we were mutually attractive, we avoided each other. A year later I should have become attached to this amiable girl, and she would have saved me from actions that dishonoured me, and made me happy. One day she said to me: "Your sister gave me such a high opinion of you, that she made me like you before we met. . . . You are even better than she said. She often used to tell me how you loved her as a child, and how you used to caress her. I told her that this was scarcely surprising seeing how pretty she is. 'Ah, dear friend,' she answered ingenuously, 'you are prettier than I, and I would give anything in the world to see you being caressed by him, it would be so charming!'" I quote this incident to give some idea of the conversation and ways of thinking among milliners' girls when they had not been corrupted. . . . Fagard appears in my *Calendar* under the name of *Séraphine Jolon*; why, we shall see later.

On the 1st of April I was engaged in looking for a place for my friend Loiseau, who was due to arrive in a few days. On the 10th I received his answer to my letter, and I note that it gave me the only pleasurable feeling I had experienced since my separation from Jeannette. A letter from the Abbé Thomas on the same day, reproaching me for my conduct with Jeannette as though it were a crime, somewhat tempered my joy in Loiseau's near arrival. I tore it up in a passion, calling the writer a *Céléno*: "These miserable harpies even pollute my virtues!" I exclaimed. When I went to see my sister Geneviève, on the same day, I found no one but Fagard, who told me that Margot had taken her away to place her with a pious lady in the Rue *Cinq-Diamants*, as she did not think it good for her to be with such a worldly woman as the shopkeeper for whom she and Agathe worked. And it was in this house that Geneviève came to grief; the pretty Fagard and the scamp Gaudet would have saved her; for, even if the latter led her astray, she would have found an honest husband in him. It was in this house (it is with pain that I repeat it, for piety itself betrayed her) that the poor child was seduced or violated by her infamous Confessor, Dusautoir, parish priest of *Saint-Jacques-la-Boucherie*. Her pregnancy delivered her into the hands of the children of the first marriage, who had her shut up in Sainte-Pélagie where she remained until my father's death. Afterwards she married her nurse's son, a cab driver named Tilhien, who later became coachman to a private family; but neither my father nor my mother ever saw him; they were dead. To-day this man is the Procureur-Syndic of the Municipality of Sacy, thanks to the Revolution! I should have ended my days on the scaffold if I had lived under the domination of the Abbé Thomas, instead of in the indulgence of Madame Parangon. As for the curé, he was a good man; but he was so carried away, so besotted by devotion to his creed, that all natural feeling was replaced by party spirit and the most complete fanaticism; interpreting this word *fanaticism* literally, and not figuratively as is more usual. . . . Let us turn our eyes from this depressing spectacle. . . .

I only saw Fagard once again. She knew nothing of my sister's misfortune, though vague rumours of her captivity had reached her. I wept with rage when I told her about it. She put her hands in mine, saying: "Ah, Monsieur Nicolas, they have been the ruin of your sister! I knew her so well, and Madame knew her so well: it was people like us that she needed. . . ." I never saw sweet Fagard again. Shortly afterwards she married a man who owned several cabs, carriages for hire, etc., and who was consequently well-to-do. . . . I will go back to the day on which I failed to find Geneviève with her.

That evening, disturbed and angry, I made a depressing experiment! One passion roused in me always awoke the rest; and so I let myself be lured by a bawd's description of a girl, and for the second time delivered my body to a prostitute. . . . Afterwards I went to the *Italiens*; this was my first visit, though I had seen comic opera at the *Foire Saint-Germain* on the 8th of March and had been enraptured. I fell in love with the Italiens for *Carlin's* sake. He was playing with *Coraline* in the *Arlequin Sauvage*, and this actress caused me such intense emotion that the sight of her produced an aberration which has nearly always been repeated since when I go to the theatre: with the imagination heated and the body at a stretch, *emittebam nullo juvante contactu.*

I find nothing in my Memoranda until the 17th of May. I worked without disturbance or distraction, and without seeing one of my acquaintances. On that day I started out to go to the Italiens, but in the neighbour-



hood of the theatre I noticed a young and pretty person in an exquisitely tasteful undress. Her elegance made me a little doubt her virtue, so I followed her to her door. She went into a dark entrance. I spoke to her. She did not answer. I cannot describe to what extreme her provocative attire had roused my lust, but I was in a sort of frenzy.* I overtook her on the staircase, and insulted her in the grossest way. She cried for help; but there can have been no one in the house at the moment. I was not dismayed by her cries, but followed her to her room, and entered it before she had time to shut the door. She ran to the window. I caught her skirt. She turned pale, and said: "Monsieur, if you are a thief, do not kill me!" I smiled: "Far from wishing to kill you, I will show you all the respect which you deserve if, as your conduct seems to indicate, you are an honest girl. Tell me, who are you?" She was trembling: "I live here with my parents: my mother sells trinkets and hat trimmings at the Palais, and I have come to fetch some things we have run out of at the shop." Then I apologised, and begged her to forgive my boldness. She was surprised to see me turn to go after I had kissed her hand. . . . "You are adorable," I said to her, "and you roused . . . *emotions* so intense that I would have let myself be cut in half to satisfy them. . . . But I should have been in despair if I had attempted . . . anything which might . . . displease . . . a virtuous young lady." "I am convinced of it," she said; "and if . . . I knew you. . . ." "Ah, Mademoiselle, I am a simple provincial undisguised . . . you see me as I am; I have nothing to hide. . . . Deign to believe me. . . ."

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*Such with me is the unfailing effect of doing without women; I go mad. If I am in daily contact with a pretty girl, as at Auxerre with Toinette and in Paris with Jeannette Demailly, this does not happen, even when I am not cohabiting with them. But if I am living alone, the sight of a pretty woman sends me into a frenzy of lust. Had I been a monk, a Carthusian for example, I should have been the most guilty or the most miserable of men.

And I kissed her warmly. She smiled: "I am a dancer at the Italiens," she answered, "and I left my mother to go straight there." "You are a dancer! Ah, how adorable your art makes you to me!" I did not stop at words: I triumphed, with difficulty, but I triumphed. . . .

"Now go," said the pretty dancer afterwards. "I must leave the house alone." "I am going to the theatre," I answered, "and I shall see you there." She seemed delighted, yet she looked at me as though she were expecting something. I turned to go and when I was outside the door, she looked at me very coldly. "When can I see you again, my Beauty?" I asked. "I do not receive young men," she answered, and shut the door angrily in my face. I did not know what was customary and had not the slightest understanding of her conduct. But when I related my adventure to Boudard, he told me that she was vexed because I had not paid her. . . . This was enlightening. . . . To return, I went to the theatre and saw my pretty dancer. She did well, very well, and seemed to have some talent. . . . I could give her name, but I will not do so as she has now acquired some position.

On the 21st of May I saw pretty *Berthé* for the first time. She was the daughter of a hatter, a native of Auxerre, and her parents had come to Paris after having gone bankrupt. She was lively, playful and a flirt, and was only about sixteen years old. Little by little I grew very free with her, but avoided committing myself too far. My temperament drove me to the prostitutes, and this a little blunted my appetite and gave me the necessary strength to avoid an honest girl directly I felt that my heart was involved. I made the acquaintance of some very amiable girls, Mlle Fagard, Mlle Destroches (whom I have already mentioned) and her sister Madelon, who was still more attractive, but whom I saw but rarely at Mme Brocard's where our respective sisters worked; and I gave up seeing all these girls for the same reason, that is to say, because my heart began to respond. For some time I regarded little Berthé as of no importance, but in a little while she became so pretty, and her way of dressing so provocative, that I was obliged to avoid her. Since my brother-in-law had discovered my sentiments towards her, Mme Greslot had become inaccessible. When I was talking to Gaudet one day, I attracted the attention of a pretty woman in the *Rue des Lombards*, a neighbour of the pastrycook with whom my friend lodged, and she asked him to persuade me to speak to her. He told me the news joyfully, for he loved me. I responded to her invitation out of curiosity, and found the young lady of the Image-Sainte-Geneviève so attractive that I neglected my friend to avoid seeing her again. . . . Yet after my misfortune had happened, no such opportunities occurred.

I often wrote to Madame Parangon, for it was an occupation that I loved; but she did not see many of my letters, because I burned at least three-quarters of them, or put them aside to show her on some future day; I only despatched those which, in case of mischance, could have been read by anyone. Her answers were still rarer. She only wrote when she was certain that the letter could be posted without anyone knowing; for since May, 1756, Toinette was no longer with her. This girl had left of her own accord, after having been attacked, or rather violated in the house, and was in service with M. de Pincemaille, Director of the Customs. This was a great misfortune to our little band of friends, as will be seen by the sequel.

On Ascension Day, the 27th of May, I was further perverted by the adventure already related in the second part of my *Pornographe* (Note D). I had gone out in the morning with Boudard to dine with our friend Renaud, who was beginning to take a great liking for me. We wanted to persuade him to get Loiseau a place at the Louvre. Boudard himself was no longer there; he was actually working at the clandestine press which has since printed *La Correspondance*, though he was ostensibly remaining in Paris as a member of the Garde-Française, the officer of which was apparently in the secret. . . . Crossing the *Pont Saint-Michel* we met a very pretty woman with her husband. The man was dressed in black and wore a square wig with three rolls of curls; he looked like a lawyer. I was struck with admiration by the lady's beauty which was ravishing. I had never seen a more attractive face, nor a costume at once so provocative and so well conceived, and I might have been looking at Madame Parangon's supple foot and slender, graceful legs. It was above all her little foot in its green shoe that held my gaze: this shoe was so small and delicate that I have never seen its equal, save perhaps on the Duchesse de Choiseul, or on Madame Lévèque, that silk merchant's wife in the *Rue Saint-Denis* opposite the fountain of the *Innocents*, to whom I dedicated my *Pied de Fanchette*. However, I had to tear my eyes away from this dainty nymph, as Boudard called me and the beauty was crossing the foot of the bridge in the opposite direction to ours. When we reached Renaud's I could think of nothing but this meeting, and talked a great deal about it after we had finished with Loiseau. On leaving the table we started out for the *Tuileries*, but I was restless and uneasy. I felt that I should see my beauty of the Pont Saint-Michel and her pretty green shoe again if I returned to my quarter. So I made my escape, and arriving there at eight o'clock in the evening, walked backwards and forwards over the bridge. Finally, I went on to the alley of the *Prêtres-Saint-Séverin*, and turned down it to avoid returning on my steps, meaning to reach the *Rue la Harpe* by the *Rue de la Parcheminerie*. At the bottom of this little street, or rather alley, lived a compatriot of mine, *La Macé* of Nitry. And what was this Macé? She was a bawd and a fairly notorious one. . . . I had already seen her two or three times and was a great favourite of hers, because (she said) she had dandled me as a baby on her knees. She was on sentry go at her door and welcomed my appearance joyfully. She asked me how I was. "Well, perfectly well." "How long is it since you have seen a woman?" "Oh, a long time, a long time." "Good! If you want an adventure . . . a charming, a unique adventure . . . I can get you one without it costing you a ha'penny." "I should be delighted, for I have been on fire ever since about midday, when I met the prettiest woman the eye of man could see on the Pont Saint-Michel." "However pretty she was . . . Madame de Pompadour, the woman I am reserving for you, will be quite as good. Come in and I will give you a book with pictures to amuse you while you are waiting." "Isn't she in the house?" "No, I am waiting for her." "In that case I will go and tell my hostess, so that she does not sit up for me." "Good, you think of everything, you are charming. . . ." I went like a flash, and was back again in a moment. La Macé took me indoors.

It was a little cold that evening, so I sat down by the big fire on a kind of sofa, and took up the book. It was a D.B.,* which at the time I only knew by name. I read quickly, and had reached the place where Saturnin and little Suzette are watching what is going on in Toinette's room through a crack in the partition, when the door opened. Fat Macé entered first with a light; a young nymph followed her: my heart raced, for I recognised her at sight. . . . She was . . . my beauty of the Pont Saint-Michel. I thought I should have died of joy and rapture. She wore exactly the same costume, notably the pretty green shoes which I had so closely

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***Histoire de Dom Bougre, portier des Chartreux, ou Mémoires de Saturnin,* one of the most notorious illustrated pornographic books of the time. [Ed.]

scrutinised! She threw her arms round my neck, and played the Miss to the best of her ability. Pleasure followed pleasure in quick succession, from nine o'clock until eleven, when La Macé served us with a dainty supper; no one else was admitted to our room. We ate, and drank some excellent wine. The lady was ravishing. Never have I seen so much nobility combined with genial ease and sweet licence: she was a completely new type to me. Then we had some liqueurs, which set my blood on fire; I was seething with desire. La Macé got up smiling, and left us; and I abandoned myself to the transports of a frenzied passion; I exhausted my lady's every caprice and fantasy. At last, at one o'clock, I could do no more. She lulled me to sleep upon her breast, and when I was unconscious, laid my head gently on the pillow and escaped. I did not wake until five o'clock. I looked for my goddess, and found one of La Macé's prettiest girls by my side. She was a little like her and had on the same dress; but the shoes, the tiny foot had been forgotten: she only moved me to disgust. La Macé tried to convince me that it was with her I had amused myself; but I looked at the girl disdainfully, although she was that *Spirette Laval* who afterwards attracted me. I left the house and went to take the air on the *Quai des Orfèvres*. When I got to the Pont Neuf, I fell exhausted on to the stone bench in front of the shop of the famous Rigal. I had hardly sat down when a big carriage or berlin passed by. It contained several ladies, apparently returning from a ball; and amongst them, in the place of honour, was my beauty of the night. But she did not see me, or did not recognise me. Delighted that chance had given me an opportunity of fulfilling my already formed plan of finding out whose favours I had enjoyed, I ran after the carriage, but my strength failed me. . . . If I had known the Capital and the various liveries, I should have discovered what I so ardently longed to know: the name and still more the quality of my goddess; and this would have been either useful to me, or my ruin. . . . But I found out later, when I saw the same carriage again with the same people and the same beautiful lady; she went in to the Français and into the box reserved for the Gentlemen of the Bedchamber; I asked her name, and was told it. The rest is a closed book. But what puzzled me in this discovery of two years later was the gentleman in the wig with whom she had crossed the bottom of the Pont Saint-Michel. My difficulty was solved by Boudard and by Renaud, who knew all the social gossip. Apparently the lady often walked out thus, escorted by one of her business men, to visit the people she employed on various kinds of work, among whom she was only known as Madame *Homo*; and several benevolent actions were done by her under the same name. But not a word was said of any action such as that in which I . . . had been her partner! I am still amazed at this extraordinary adventure! I related it without disguise to Renaud in 1766, and he confirmed all my conjectures. He told me that this daughter of a duke and wife of a prince, the Comtesse d'E***, was no wanton, but she wished to have a son, whom she could father upon a fantastic husband who had never *seen* her. Nor was there anything criminal in this, as she was only giving scorn for scorn, and injustice for injustice. The plan had been to make her husband drunk, and let him wake in his wife's bed; and the duke, her father, was party to all this. . . . But I heard later from one of the lady's dressmakers, who afterwards became her daughter's governess, that, by a strange mischance, the husband was suddenly obliged to leave Paris, and so it was impossible to unite the couple. . . . *Septimanie* (the lady's maiden name) had a daughter, and was obliged to conceal her birth. . . . I shall mention her again; I have already practically named her. In

1767 I sent her the first copy of my *Lucile.* I permitted myself this satisfaction.*

On the 1st of June, I called to mind my declaration of love to Rose, *miratus meam insaniam atque meam imbecillitatem* (such are the terms I use). And indeed such a passion was madness to one in my then position, but it proves this great truth, that, unless a man is constitutionally unfit or too spiritually minded, he desires every woman, even though he adores but one. It is in Nature's plan that one male should suffice for several females, and furthermore the preservation of the female is much more important than that of the male. With the present system of large armies and Christian monogamy the population is bound gradually to decrease, and is, in fact, decreasing. If princes want to put half their male subjects under arms and so compel them to celibacy, they can do so, if they take the greatest care of the women, prevent prostitution or regulate it as proposed in my *Pornographe*, and give two wives to every civilian. They could also increase the navy, which already consumes so many men, if they allowed any sailor's wife, who was not pregnant when her husband left her, to get one child, or two, according to the duration of the voyage, by some young and honest lad chosen by her husband, whom the latter can legitimise by acknowledging them. Entomb a third of our men in the mines, O barbarous princes, squander another third in celibate monks and priests, but replace these losses exactly, by providing for the subsistence of the women they would have made fertile and then giving them to the men that are left. But if you do not want such a complete revision of your laws, at least carry out

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*As Restif indicates, he came eventually to believe that "Madame Homo" was the Countess d'Egmont whom we know from other sources to have led a wild life. He ventured to express this belief at the end of his *Lucile*, and even, as we see, to send the book to the Countess. [Ed.]

the suggestions in my *Pornographe*; then there will be no more wasted women. All will bear children, and you will have males enough for all your needs, your uses and abuses, your soldiers, monks and celibates; enough for eunuchs even; especially if you either forbid women to become nuns or make nuns bear. And your public women will give you as many children as though you kept all the males at home. . . . (All this is easier of execution and more urgent now, under the Republic, since we have been forced to increase our armies, and, at the same time, have returned homeless nuns and monks without pension to ordinary life.) *Télèphe* sells well, thanks to the imbecility of fashion; but its author* was a villainous rogue to have dared to establish the infamous paradox that a large population is not a good thing! For this atrocious maxim, which, by itself, makes Télèphe the most dangerous, the most contemptible of books, he deserves to have said to him: *"If the species is too numerous, its decrease had best be begun with you."* . . . M. de Voltaire, otherwise so great and estimable a man, is always casting doubt upon the vast populations common among the ancient peoples, and this is because he argues from our own destructive system. He cannot understand that far more children were born in former times; he does not consider that, though the men made war and perished by thousands, the females were all productive and made good the waste: that, if a country was devastated, it added to the population of the conqueror; because all the females were preserved and had children by their masters, or by other men to whom they were given, thus furnishing native-born colonists for the devastated region. Nowadays if we tried to colonise, we should depopulate our country as Spain has done. France is like La Salpétrière, of which the Superior, Sister Victoire, said on the 1st of May,

*Florian.

1784: "Everything in the place is consumed in the place; no one leaves it; its inmates work, eat, fade and die without the slightest profit to the State." Our social order is detestable! I cannot conceive what puritanical and destructive genius has possessed the human race since the Christian era began! The union of the sexes has been made a blemish and a shame; merriment and all that contributes to it a vice; pleasure, a crime. By fits morose and philanthropic, their crucified Christ (who may, after all, be no more than a figment of the imagination of that bandy-legged illuminate, Paul, since no contemporary historian mentions him) has wrapped all nature in the stuff of mourning and of bitter grief: he does not demand blood; he only wants to saturate himself in the torrent of our tears. . . . Sanction, oh, sanction pleasure, most savage lawgiver, it comes so rarely! . . . Not only are modern peoples less numerous, but they are less active; unless we contend that they are more engaged in the unessential arts than were the Ancients. They have to buy negroes from Africa to cultivate America, which insatiable Europeans are devouring together with their own countries. Before wealth and the sweets of luxury had become necessities, proprietors grew wheat and other nourishing plants enough, and three or four times more than enough, for the wants of their families. The produce of the soil was not sold, and everyone had enough, save, perhaps, during that time when every nation was forced to contribute grain to support the lazy Romans. But they reared animals too. Furthermore, men used to eat an infinity of herbs and fruits and roots (such as acorns, etc.) that are no longer used; they ate all animals without exception; the cooking was negligible. If all men were equals as they used to be, and as I propose to present them in my *Anthropographe*, a hundred thousand of them could live in the same area that now supports but fifteen thousand. So may the mighty Voltaire cease to cast doubt upon history, sacred and profane. Men actually did exist in the numbers reported, or approximately so. . . . You did not expect that excursus, friend Reader? I did not expect it myself when I began to write; it is just a passing kick at prejudice and superstition.

On the 9th of June I went to board with *Bonne Sellier*, the wife of one of my fellow-printers, himself the son of a master printer of Soissons. Bonne Sellier had been a chambermaid with the Princesse d'Épinoi, and had a certain refinement. Her husband was a drunkard and a man of thoroughly bad life (especially since he had lost his children) and at the same time extremely pious. . . . They lived in the house of *Sophie Grandjean,* known as the Fair Pastrycook, whom a gentleman of Picardy, *M. de Courbuisson*, had just married for love. M. and Mme de Courbuisson occupied the double apartment on the second floor, and had a pretty chambermaid called *Thérèse.* A pretty butcher's daughter, Mlle Faucheux, lived on the third floor with her parents; Bonne Sellier had the fourth, and on the fifth, Mlle *Zoé Delaporte,* a teacher, lived in the front, and the parents of pretty Pèlerine Berthé, the hatter's daughter, at the back. I was very happy with my hostess; she was an excellent woman at heart, but she furnished additional and conclusive proof that a woman cannot have boarders without becoming their concubine. Although Bonne Sellier was no longer young, it was an established custom for all her boarders to have her – or for her to have her boarders. In a word she was our wife, and convenience took the place of attractions. She took the greatest care of us; each of us might have been her only husband by the way she nursed us when we were ill. She had had a very agreeable face, but of the delicately irregular type which wrinkles early. However, a careful toilet took fifteen years off her age at a no greater distance than from one end of the room to the other, and it was this that from time to time reanimated the desires of her old boarders, and gave her the services of newcomers. I am sorry that I cannot offer you a more chaste presentment, Reader, but I put truth above the fine morality of imagination, because truth is morality. Quite enough books (Bernardin's *Études de la Nature*, for example) daily edify us with their superhuman optimism; but this is not my object in *The Human Heart Unveiled*. My object is to portray the life of a man as it is, without reticence and unvarnished. I know no other means of laying bare the movements of the human heart; a single fact suppressed might mislead the Reader; he no longer understands and is back again in romance.

On the 14th of July I commemorated my beginnings as a printer, but only within myself and without leaving my case. My emotion was no less intense for this when I thought of Madame Parangon, and the day was consecrated to her alone. I had received a letter from her the day before, in which she expressed in enigmatic language the warmest tenderness and a truly maternal affection. I can recall this letter more precisely than the others, because I learnt it by heart to recite to Renaud, as something written to a third person. It will give an idea of the style of the others. Here it is:

> *He will think* one *has forgotten him, if he is left too long without news of what touches him most nearly.* One *feels all that the poor child must be suffering! It is as though a young and tender tree were transplanted into a scorching climate; he needs to be watered with friendship's consolation. But here there is a heart which remains the same towards him; here, and five leagues to the East. His young* friend *belongs wholly to him; she speaks of him, and, when she cannot speak, she writes. She is growing so pretty* one *need have no fear of other Beauties, or of other fancies. In due time* one *heard the end of*

> *Aquiline (Jeannette), and this adventure does so much honour to the East of seven leagues away that* one *regards it as among his finest actions. His young* friend *thinks the same, and even went so far as to write: "I consider what he did for our sex, in the person of Aquiline, as done to myself." And* one *goes even farther yet in thought, for* one *regards the Oriental as a brother, a son and a friend, a fond friend. . . .* One *weeps when looking upon the places where* one *talked with him, when sitting where he used to sit. . . . Ah, how the Oriental is beloved! He must always remember that nothing can ever make his fate a matter of indifference! Even if he committed a crime,* one *would excuse and comfort her unlucky friend. . . . Dear Oriental, keep to good ways and preserve your sensibility to make happy the Oriental five leagues hence, and* one *will thank you as though it were for herself. His* friend *seven leagues to the East still holds him dear. He was enchanted by the Aquiline affair, and says that that is you, that is your style. Go to the Rue Montorgueil, and into the second house after Rue Tiquetonne, coming from the top, and give the child of about two years old you will find there a kiss from me.*

That is all that I can remember for certain. I went to kiss the child, but they would not let me see it; I do not know why, but perhaps Madame Parangon had changed her mind, for she never referred to the subject again. In passing: how well I merited the good opinion *my friend* had of me! A dancer of the Italiens violated, in so far as it was possible for her to be violated. . . . La Macé . . . and the utter exhaustion of the body destined for her sister with a harlot, for I did not know at the time that she was a princess. . . . The vilest prostitutes when they came my way. . . . Madame Lallemand. . . . A married woman shared with six or seven other men! But, as I see things now, my most disgraceful episode was the one with two actresses, of which we shall be hearing soon, or the inconceivable incident of the bowling-alley. . . . And I did not die of shame!

In the evening of that day I felt a need to unbosom myself to a pure and responsive mind; so I went to see Jeannette Demailly. At this time she loved my sister Geneviève fondly. She had good news to tell me. Her mercer was so pleased with her household management that he had asked her to be his wife that morning, and proposed to put twenty-five thousand livres in her name, over and above her marriage settlement and the other matrimonial advantages, such as the reversion of his whole fortune, etc. I rejoiced with my friend, or rather with her who was more really my sister than those of my own blood, because she loved me more. I called her sister, and the mercer praised us both for it, saying: "Those titles are a sign of the good friendship with which you are content; and I think they may have had another good result. Did you use them in private when you were living together?" "Always," I answered. "Then be sure that they did something to preserve the honesty of your affection; for every time you uttered the words *brother* or *sister,* they reminded you of what you must be to each other." I found this an excellent and illuminating idea. However, it is essential that such words should not grow stale through use; for one monk does not hate another less because he calls him *brother*, nor does a prostitute respect her bawd more for calling her *mamma.*

Towards the middle of July I felt a wish to know a pretty blonde of the *Rue des Maçons.* I used to see her every day from the windows of Claude Hérissant's printing-room, going down the *Rue Notre-Dame* on her way to work for a dressmaker in the Cité. In order to speak to her, I had recourse to a singular device. I bought a fine book, bound in morocco with gilt edges, from my printer. My beauty passed in the morning, at midday and in the evening, and I lay in wait for her on one of her return journeys. In the Rue de la Harpe, I covered the paper in which the book was wrapped with mud: a pastrycook saw me doing it, but as she could not know the real reason for my action she probably imagined another, for she laughed heartily at me. Then I came up with the beautiful blonde, and said to her: "Mademoiselle, you have just dropped this," and I handed her the muddied parcel. She took it, looked at it, and while she was opening it, I turned back quickly the way I had come. Thus she was obliged to keep the gilt-edged book, in which I had placed a letter conspicuously enough to be noticed. The pastrycook had been watching me, and as I repassed her door, she said: "You're cunning enough! But what was the good of making the parcel dirty?" I passed on without seeming to hear. Next day, quite certain that the Fair would have read my love letter, I again waylaid her, and we met near the pastrycook's shop. She recognised me, and I saluted her. "Monsieur," she said, loudly enough to be overheard, "that book does not belong to me." "It does now, Mademoiselle. Did you find . . . a letter in it?" "No, I assure you I did not. Perhaps it fell out?" But I saw by her smile that she had read it. Then the pastrycook joined us, and disclosed all that she had seen of my little preparations. "It is a book of devotion, Madame," said the girl, "and I must thank Monsieur for the interest he takes in my salvation." At this the gossip's face fell a good foot, so that I could not help laughing at her. Then I took leave of my Fair, but only to put this inquisitive woman off the track. I ran down the Rue de la Parcheminerie and the Rue Boutebrie, and overtook the pretty blonde at the bottom of the Rue du Foin. "I have put that pastrycook off the scent, you see!" "I see you are a cunning fellow," she answered, "but now I am going to speak plainly. I am twenty-two years old: if you are thinking of marriage, address yourself to my father; I will put no obstacles in the way . . . granted that he finds you suitable. But no secret meetings; they cast suspicion on a girl. This is where we live and you can choose your own time to come and speak to my father; he is a clerk and you will find him in before nine in the morning, from two to three in the afternoon, and after seven in the evening." I assured her that I would not fail to take advantage of the permission she had given. I bowed, she curtsied, and we only met once again: a week before she married an engraver named Basset, a very handsome man, who has since made her a rich woman. (She is called *Rose Vignon* in my *Calendar.*) At this time, when she was sure of a husband, she appeared several times in the Rue Notre-Dame, and it seemed to me that there was something ostentatious about her coming. So, at her fourth appearance, I went down into the street. Rose Vignon smiled at me and I accosted her. After our preliminary greetings, she said to me: "I think I owe you a good deal! There was no pretence about that letter; you really meant what you said. M. Basset, who is a clever engraver, found it in your beautiful Book of Hours, and it made him think so much of me that he asked for me in marriage without a dowry. Everything is arranged. But I am sure that you would have loved me tenderly?" "I should have adored you had I been able to marry you; but . . . too poor for so beautiful a girl. . . ." "Let us go to your apartment!" Surprised and enchanted, I gave her Bonne Sellier's address. She went there alone, and asked for me, saying that she was my cousin Gueneau of Vermenton. Then I arrived. . . . She had not come to pick daisies. It seemed to me that she was not in love with her intended; and indeed, later on, she displayed a preference for ugly *Dlrml.*

On the 15th of August, the third anniversary of the dream in which I had seen Madelon Baron vindicated, I met Thérèse Bezanger, her cousin and godmother of our daughter, on the *Petit-Pont.* The sight of her brought back all Auxerre, and especially Her whom I most missed. . . . I asked unaffectedly after Madame Parangon, and Mlle Bezanger told me that for a year past she had been hardly recognisable: always sad, always dressed in dull colours, and now in black: "All the town is talking of her profound grief." "But what is the cause?" I exclaimed. "Her father's death a month ago." "Her father's death!" "Yes, her father is dead. . . . But surely you knew about it: they say that she writes to you!" "Madame Parangon occasionally writes to ask me to execute commissions for her, which I do with pleasure, as I should!" "That is what people think," said Thérèse. But I was astonished that Madame Parangon had not written to me about the death of her beloved father! "Did you hear how rude Monnetot of Rigny was to Mlle Fanchette?" "No," I answered, disguising my agitation, "and I cannot conceive how anyone could be rude to her." "This is what happened: Monnetot returned from Paris. He is a 'beau,' so the young ladies of Vermenton, who are nearly all related to him, went out in a party to meet him just past *la Vaux d'Auxerre*: they invited Fanchette to join them, without apparently telling her the object of the excursion. When they caught sight of a chaise driving hell for leather, for this attorney's clerk puts on the airs of a marquis, the young ladies divided into two ranks on either side of the road. Monnetot got out, and gave them a patronising bow. Then, catching sight of Madame Parangon's sister, he laughed foppishly as if he were watching a comedy: 'Ha! ha! ha! Mademoiselle Fanchette! How charming! I hardly expected this!' 'I did not come on your account, Monsieur: I had not the least idea that you were to be the *Zero* of the party.' The attorney's clerk, outraged by that *Zero*, did not measure his words. 'If I had welcomed you as your vanity led you to expect,' he answered, 'you would never have been so grossly impertinent. . . . You may be interested to know that I shall not take a wife from Vermenton: my choice is already made.' At this remark the girls gathered round Mlle Fanchette, and entreated the quill-driving marquis to get back into his chaise. Which he did. The young ladies went home together, and though everyone scoffed at him, the attorney's clerk was as impudent as ever, maintaining that Mademoiselle Fanchette had persuaded her family to approach his, and boast of her trifling property." On this last innuendo I left Thérèse, furiously angry with Monnetot. . . . I described my interview to Madame Parangon, but the letter was never despatched. It went the way of so many others, into the fire.

This conversation with Thérèse Bezanger did harm to my morals (everything was to turn against me). Suspicion had been cast on Mlle Fanchette and I became less dainty and less scrupulous (and I was little enough so already!). I showed less reserve in my divagations, and was less repentant and remorseful afterwards. That very week, I set myself to seduce Thérèse Courbuisson, the fair pastrycook's pretty chambermaid. I succeeded; the girl was not austere. We used to meet on the cellar steps when she was fetching the wine for supper. One day we were caught by a fellow-boarder of mine, a handsome lad called *Richecœur*; and the very next day, a little late for my appointment, I caught him in my turn. We both laughed; and from thenceforward gave each other the wink, so that we had Thérèse on different days. This went on until I noticed how pretty little Berthé was growing. Then I let Richecœur have the chambermaid to himself, and set myself to woo this knowing little tenant of the fifth floor back.

Pèlerine was a little more difficult than Thérèse; but, on the other hand, I had become somewhat more of a profligate, and my old principles, which had suffered so many shocks, were deserting me entirely. The little girl was poor and fond of pretty things; I snared her with a few gifts. It was the first time that I had made presents with this motive. A short time afterwards, I discovered that I was only the understudy instead of the principal actor. It was Bonne Sellier who pointed this out to me, for she was as jealous to prevent inconstancy as though each of us was her only lover; she claimed a monopoly in us and did not like losing anything. But we deceived her. . . . My principal (and my predecessor) was a hatter named *Guillaume*; he was a nephew of the bookseller Guillaume in the Place du Pont-Saint-Michel, and brother of *Guillaume the Cuckold*, a bookseller at the corner of the *Rue de Hurepoix*. He has married the girl since and opened a hat shop in Auxerre; and they have done quite well. I left little Berthé directly I knew I had a rival, and found myself without a mistress. But the town had a rich bill of fare, as the epicures say, and I turned to crapulous and secret debauch as easier to hide.

My friend Loiseau had not been able to leave our town as soon as he had led me to expect; he arrived in September, his heart bleeding from the grief of parting with Maîne Lebègue. We found him a place immediately, Renaud, Boudard and myself, with Guérin, a wealthy printer of the *Rue de Sorbonne*. . . . At first, although very friendly, we were not inseparable. The reasons for our later and unexampled intimacy and the results of this will soon be seen. As partner in my debauches I took a man from whom I never received anything but applause; for Gaudet revered me as Omar did Mahomet. Sometimes in the very midst of our worst excesses, he would mourn the loss of my sister Geneviève, praising her charms, and especially the beauty of her breasts, and repeating that he wanted to marry her. "To have a sister of yours would be too great an honour for me, even after her little weakness," he would exclaim. "Listen, make yourself the leader of a sect, and I will be your first apostle!" He thought every utterance of mine sublime and marvelled at it; if I had said: "Prostrate yourself!" he would have prostrated himself. This character was diametrically opposed to that of Gaudet d'Arras in the *Paysan*: but in this *Springs of Conduct Unveiled*, I must present men as they were. The censor Dhermilly, who spent part of his life in Spain, forced me to spoil the character of the Cordelier in the first edition of the *Paysan*, for fear of offending the Order; but the fault was rectified in later editions, and especially in the fifth. In this edition the *Paysan* and *Paysanne* are published together, and the character of Gaudet d'Arras is developed in the *Juvénales* annexed to it. It ought to be reprinted once more under my personal supervision; but I have no hope of this, with the booksellers suppressing my editions, just as that infamous *Defer*, called *Maisonneuve*, suppressed my fourth edition of the first volumes of the *Contemporaines*.

I find no entries in my note-books until the 23rd of March, 1757, save of a few visits paid to my sister Margot during the end of 1756 and the beginning of the New Year. I had a grudge against her because of poor Geneviève, and only went to see her for the sake of the beautiful bosom of Séraphine Destroches, Cécile Decoussy's fine eyes and the delicate seductions of Hélène Brocard, the daughter of the house. We shall become acquainted with these girls. Also my note-books contain the names and addresses of more than two hundred public women whom Gaudet and I had visited and done crapulous homage to since we had been in Paris. I did not imitate Gaudet in his worst excesses on these occasions; for he loved to outrage Nature: sometimes *pædicabat* these unfortunates, *irrumabat, mammellabat, buccinellabat,* or *curatissime lotas fellabat.* He met with no opposition, for he was extremely strong, and a few blows would have overcome repugnance. One day when we were with a very pretty girl who lived at the top of the *Rue des Mauvais-Garçons*, Faubourg Saint-Germain, he made me take the girl first as was his custom, and then was seized with such a lustful rage that I was obliged to defend myself against him: *intra coitus nisus, accensus libidine spectator, me superpædicare conabatur.* The crisis was so violent that we had to allow him *infrapædicare puellam* at the same time, or he would have made an end of both of us. He apologised afterwards. . . . I was seeing something of Loiseau at this time; but I concealed my appalling debauchery from him, at least in part; for he was the friend of virtue. As well as Loiseau, I had Renaud to satisfy my taste for metaphysical, ethical and critical discussion; Boudard for somewhat more refined amusements (for he was earning well) and to help me in the necessary things of life, such as the buying of clothes, etc., and Gaudet for debauchery. . . . Thus I dwelt in an illusive security, whilst the fatal blade of misfortune swung, suspended by a hair, above my head. . . . It was soon to fall. . . .

At about five or six o'clock in the evening of March the 23rd, I left my place in the printing room to fetch a candle from the box in which they were kept. As I was going upstairs, I heard a piercing scream which came from the Hôtel-Dieu. Putting my head out of a little window, I saw the servants bending over one of their companions; she was pregnant and had just hurt herself by falling on the leads while hanging out the washing. As I went through the printing room on my way to the closet where I worked, I uttered a remark to *Moisson* the Convulsionary, one of my fellow-printers, which rose to my lips I knew not why: "Monsieur Moisson, sooner or later vice is always punished." "True," he answered. "The wicked flourish but in appearance; in the midst of their pleasures, hell opens under their feet." Then another Convulsionary, Edme, formerly my comrade in

Auxerre, at this time working for the same printer as myself in Paris and later a bookseller in the *Rue Saint Jean-de-Beauvais*, exclaimed: "Ah, that was a good thought! *God is striking him. . . .*" "*God is striking him,* Monsieur Edme?" said Moisson. "Say rather God is touching him!" . . . At eight o'clock in the evening of March the 26th, while I was washing my hands after work, Edme's remark came back to my mind, and I said to Moisson: "God is striking me, Monsieur Moisson!" "Do not jest," he answered. "The matter is too serious!"

Far be all superstition from you, Reader! I am no Suetonius.

There is a subject at which I have only hinted in my story of the years I spent under Madame Parangon's roof: firstly, because I was unaware of the facts until after my assault upon her; and, secondly, because I felt a repugnance from introducing it among the interesting events which fill that epoch. M. Parangon had five children, two boys and three girls, whose origin was strange enough! The eldest, a son by that Reine the First who was before my time, was now in Paris. The second, Madelon, was the daughter of little Manon the rubber. The third was a son by that haughty lady (my cousin Gauthier) who made fun of me and my ass on my arrival. He has taken his father's place in Auxerre. The fourth, Fillette, was the child of Tourangeot's Marie; and the fifth, Javotte, was the daughter of Mme Linard's chambermaid, Marianne, whom I have mentioned in passing. All these children had been brought up in M. Parangon's house, and four were still there; and, owing to the precautions which had been taken and the extreme goodness of Colette, everyone believed them to be the legitimate issue of the marriage. When this great secret was disclosed to me by Gaudet d'Arras, my love and veneration for my good fairy increased to such an extent that for some days I really thought she was divine. On each occasion she had gone to Paris a few days before the lying in. Manon's mother, Mme Bourgoin, who was the friend of both husband and wife, was entrusted with the secret and with the execution of M. Parangon's plans; for never once did his wife oppose his wishes. On the 28th of March I met Caulette with young Parangon as I was leaving Claude Hérissant's; they were walking rapidly and did not see me. I followed them, and overheard these words: "We must find out if she received the parcel." "Yes," answered the young man. "She will not say." I heard no more, but after a longish round they went into a house in the Rue du Temple. They came out again in a quarter of an hour, and returned to where the lad was staying. I found out the same evening that Madame Parangon's sister-in-law, the widow of a barrister, lived in that house in the Rue du Temple. This set my mind at rest and I neglected to call on this lady with whom Madame Parangon had not put me in touch. For more than three weeks indeed, I lived in a comfortable security that almost amounted to torpor. I have noticed that this state is the forerunner of misfortune.

On Holy Thursday, the 15th of April, 1757, I was still in bed when Tourangeot the Tartar, with whom I had been reconciled long ago, came into my room. "Bad news!" he exclaimed. "Madame Parangon is dead." "Dead!" I exclaimed, and the word was a sharp cry. "In three days. Three weeks ago." "Three weeks ago! Oh, misery, and I did not know it!" "On the 23rd of March," he continued, "she went out to take a letter to the post. It was slippery, and she fell as she was going down the steps from the Cour des Cordeliers. She broke something. . . . She died on the 27th between eight and nine o'clock in the morning." "It is impossible! You are a liar!" I was half delirious, and it was this that kept me from fainting. Tourangeot looked at me, and then threw a letter on the bed; he could not read writing. I seized it. It was from M. Parangon. I crushed it in a fury. But I returned to it. It was addressed to the Tartar, solely no doubt that he should make me read it to him:

> *"I have just lost my wife: her heart I lost long ago to a fellow who does not amount to much: you know the one. I have the letter to him she was taking to the post, and it tells me all I want to know about what my wife had in mind and was planning for him. None of it will eventuate; the scoundrel will never be a master-printer, and still less my brother-in-law. I have someone else ready for Fanchette: a young man whom she met at Semur when she stayed there a little time before the fellow went to Paris. My wife was so frightened of this young man that she always had a reason why her sister should not go to Semur again when occasion offered. Look into the fellow's conduct, and let me know what you discover through the scribe of the Carmelites; I will pay the cost and more. See if he knows, and tell me. I want to see Fanchette married in three weeks' time, for she loved her sister, and for that reason holds somewhat to the fellow. 28th of March, 1757.*
>
> *P.S.—I hold Fanchette in the palm of my hand, through a letter I have just found which made her blush for shame. The scoundrel shan't have both the sisters."*

Anguish overwhelmed me. . . . The Tartar took his letter and disappeared without my making any movement to prevent him. Shortly afterwards I heard that he found out all he wanted to know from one of my fellow-boarders, a big Avignonais named *Molet*, who had been a Mandrinist* though we did not know it at the time. Molet wished me no harm, and told everything he knew about my doings with Gaudet and my adventures with Thérèse and little Berthé, etc., out of pure delight in vice, and thinking to enhance my reputation thereby. The Tartar made a public scribe of the Place Maubert write all this down, and then despatched the

*Mandrin, a celebrated smuggler executed on the wheel in 1755, gave his name to robbers or other criminals of the most reckless type. [Ed.]

news to his former master, by whose orders he had shown me that fatal letter. Richecœur and Bonne Sellier told me that Mlle Fanchette was married within a week of being shown Tourangeot's letter. Thus was vice punished in my person; but for it, Fanchette would have remained faithful to me. Young people, Vice is a manchineel tree and its fruit is poison!

Grief and despair, indignation, fury, and a thirst for vengeance fought for possession of my heart. Grief was the strongest. I interrupted when I was spoken to; I cried aloud, I wept, I groaned! . . . That I had written in the previous week to Madame Parangon and Mlle Fanchette, condoling with them on the death of their revered father, added to my desperation. In my letter I had manifested the tenderest affection for the two sisters, and the intensest grief for the loss of their father. Oh most unlucky! At one blow I lost the fondest, the most zealous, the most perfect friend, my sweetheart-wife, and all my prospects. . . . But my sweetheart and career were nothing: it was for Colette I grieved. It was for Colette that I cried and cried to Heaven, sometimes with rage, sometimes with choking sobs! At last a sort of numbness came over me, which others took for calm, so that I was told the rest of what the Tartar had said, namely: *that M. Parangon could easily have found not one, but ten lovers for Fanchette, who by no means disliked Blonde, and had gone mad about an attorney's clerk of Vermenton, named Monnetot; that Madame Parangon's death had made a stir in the town, yet such was the respect felt for her that no one believed certain innuendos made by her husband; but, nevertheless, everyone knew that, for some time past, she had taken her own letters to the post. Formerly they had been taken by Toinette, whom M. Parangon declared he had dismissed, and who was now in service with M. Depincemaille.*

I got up without a word at the end of this discourse and went out. I walked at random; all Nature was changed for me; everything made me sad, life was intolerable. . . . Ah, suicide is natural enough to the thinking being when his unhappiness is such that pain outweighs the pleasure of existence! I could not weep; my heart was clutched, I had been struck! . . . Richecœur had followed me and, noting my aimless wandering, led me home again. Bonne Sellier came to me; she took my hands and pressed them, seeking to melt my grief. . . . I did not want to see one of my good friends; not even Jeannette Demailly, who was so soon to become Mme Ponsardin. And I have noticed since that, in my heaviest sorrows, I have always run away from my friends, because at those times everyone is hateful to me; they are none the less dear to me later, but my sufferings would have profaned our friendship. Only Loiseau rose above this rule.

Luckily the Tartar took the sad tidings to Renaud; and Loiseau, who happened to be with him, was almost as heavily stricken as myself. "Come quickly," he said to Renaud, "we must go to the help of our common friend, for this will be a terrible blow to him!" "Yes, let us go," answered Renaud, "for that letter is really hellish." They hurried to my side. They found me delirious, but Loiseau touched the right note; he talked of Her, repeating things that he and she had said to each other about me. The result was inevitable; my heart melted, the tears began to flow, and my oppression was relieved. Too little master of my grief for self-control, I burst into tears and cried: "O my friend, my heavenly friend! I had made myself unworthy of you; that is why you have left me! My adoration, your fair soul can see my anguish! it can hear my cries! . . . O divine Colette, I have lost you, and with you all the sweetness of my life! . . . I have no one, no one! . . . I am alone in the universe! . . . Wretched man that I am! . . . Oh, let all my sorrows be renewed in me, and overwhelm, and kill me! . . . I have nothing left to make me care for life! . . ."

Tears were in Bonne Sellier's eyes; Loiseau supported me in his arms; Renaud paced the room with rapid steps, striking his forehead. Richecœur said in amazement to my friends: "But he has never even mentioned this woman for whom he grieves so deeply." "He venerated her too much to speak of her," answered Loiseau gently. "She was the goddess of the sanctuary," exclaimed Renaud impetuously, "for ever hidden away from the profane!" Both the words and tone of this remark gave me pleasure; but Bonne Sellier was more touched by Loiseau's words. "Ah, then he really loved her! When I was chambermaid to the Princess d'Épinoi, I have often heard her say that a good man never utters the name of a woman who has favoured him, save in dreams or in some forest where he is sure of being alone." I wept more and more as my grief melted into tenderness, and with my tears my life was less in danger; but every moment I was more dreadfully conscious of the horrible void in my life. My very soul was gone; I had no support. For She whose esteem I valued, whose scorn I dreaded more than death, whose body I worshipped, whose presence I yearned for as a child for his mother, as a fond husband for his beloved wife, as a suckling lamb for the ewe, She was no more! . . . And with her vanished all the hopes that had sustained my pride. . . . Thenceforward I was a nonentity, condemned to vegetate for life as a journeyman printer.

My two friends, with Boudard who joined them in the evening, did not leave me until they went to work next morning, which was the Friday preceding Easter. By then I was calm in appearance; for my paroxysms of anguish and despair had left me with no feeling. I went to work.

The sight of the printing room brought back the years of my apprenticeship so vividly that I saw Colette again and spoke with her; I was back again working in my old place at home with her, my case was wet with tears; I could not see, and yet worked on mechanically. I read only with my eyes, my memory retained the phrases with no help from my mind, and I set them up in lines. (I have more than once had a similar experience, and this convinced me, even before I had studied the subject, that memory is a purely physical faculty; and so perhaps is thought also?) At midday I went downstairs, in the persuasion that they were the stairs from the printing room of my apprenticeship; I saw the cloth laid and the soup served in the shop parlour, went in, and sat down at table. The servant burst out laughing; Mme Hérissant entered, and, with her, memory returned, and I fled uttering a sigh of anguish. . . .

I could not eat when I reached home. Bonne Sellier had expected this; she had some rice soup ready and fed me with a spoon, distracting my mind the while with gentle words. . . .

For a fortnight I remained in this melancholy condition, and only emerged from it through the ministrations of Loiseau and of Mlle Zoé. Zoé had just begun to comfort my poor friend a little for the loss of Maîne Lebègue; for Maîne's father had forced her to marry a widower in easy circumstances named *Fourrier*. . . . On his visits to me, Loiseau had seen Zoé a number of times (when first we met her she was at Mme Lacan's house, but now she had moved to Bonne Sellier's), and after they had chatted together and found they held the same opinions, they had become friends. This is the way they took to soothe my despair.

While Loiseau was discussing my grievous state with Zoé in her apartment, his attention was attracted to her pupils. Three of them were the daughters of a violinist at the Opera, of whom one, Éléonore, was fair and had a bewitching face. Her other two pupils were pretty brunettes of twelve and fourteen years. Loiseau, who knew the sex's power over me, begged Zoé to send the two elder girls to my room, where I now spent all my time, sunk in my grief and drowned in tears. So Mlle Zoé told the two children what to do, and they came to me and took my hands, begging me to be comforted. . . . I was touched by their age, their innocence and winning ways; and was obliged to answer my sensible and pretty guests politely. They stayed with me, and roused me first to join in their conversation (for a woman is much more engaging at this age than a man), and then in their little games; within an hour they had coaxed me to this point. I was amazed at myself! Loiseau and Zoé, who were watching me, then sent in the three sisters, who were much younger: Sophie, the eldest, was nine; Éléonore was eight and Adélaïde about seven. I marvelled at Éléonore's angelic face! In it every charm of beauty was united to touching and ingenuous candour. She roused an emotion for which I could find no words, but it was somewhat like a father's tenderness. Zoé saw the impression she had made on me, and said to Bonne Sellier: "She has found a way to his heart; she must be like someone dear to him." As a matter of fact, from what I can remember, Éléonore was like my mother. She poured balm upon my grief, and broke the hard crust of it with her pretty ways, and changed its intolerable bitterness to tenderness. She saved my life. . . . She saved her father's life! But I did not know it then; this sweet comfort was not given me until the sight of her, whom I had loved paternally unaware, was forbidden to me.

I was fit for work the day after I first saw Éléonore. Everyone was amazed! My first request on re-entering the house was for my little friend, and Zoé either sent or brought her to me; and I always had some trifle to give her. She became as deeply attached to me as I to her; none of the other boarders could make her go near them, but she threw herself into my arms.

The violinist's wife heard what the sight of Éléonore had done for me and of our mutual affection; so she came to see me. She examined me in silence. At first her name was not mentioned, and when Bonne Sellier finally introduced her as the child's mother I found myself unmoved by her.

I was cured. Mlle Zoé did not think it proper to let her pupils visit me any more, and said so frankly when I complained. I agreed that she was right, but I could not get Éléonore out of my mind. Winter arrived, and as Mlle Zoé's pupils knew all that she could teach them they no longer came to the house. I lost sight of them altogether. Later we shall hear who Éléonore was; she had been entrusted to the violinist *Travenol's* wife by a relative and the former, to avoid questions, called the little girl her daughter and the children called her sister; perhaps they thought she was their sister.

Although apparently consoled I felt my losses more keenly than at first. But the tale of them was incomplete, for I still had the best friend that ever lived. Loiseau made every effort to distract my mind, and I, to oblige him, tried to forget my troubles. With this intention I went out to see my sisters . . . a much changed man! Sad and discouraged, I no longer looked at the girls with a certain superiority; now that I had no future, I felt inferior to them all; a girl from the dregs of the people would do me too much honour by consenting to become the wife of a journeyman printer with no prospects. My politeness took on a something low and cringing; I hardly dared raise my eyes to Séraphine Destroches, whom formerly I had considered but a passing amusement. Now I would have liked to marry her; but I found out that she had some property and so avoided her, convinced that I should meet with a scornful refusal; for I have always been proud encugh to fear contempt more than poverty or suffering.

Geneviève lived in the Rue Cinq-Diamants with some pious women who made underclothes and dresses. I used to go to see her nearly every Sunday and holiday, and one of her many fellow-pupils enchanted me: she was called *Léonore Robbé-Poupart,* and has since married *Marganne* the perfumer. She had a charming face, but her dress and manner showed that she belonged to comfortable people and this distressed me. I could have wished her to be the daughter of a street porter or water carrier; then I would have made her my wife, if I had been allowed to have her. Nevertheless I tried to express my feelings to her, and she listened because my sister was her good friend. This first point gained, it was easy to get into the good graces of an innocent young girl with no experience of life. I succeeded in winning her love, and determined to put her in the family way so that I might become her husband. She consented; and my sister, opening the door a crack, kept watch for us. But directly her mistress noticed that something was toward, she warned the parents (not having the luck to be a priest, I was regarded with distrust), and they removed her immediately; for they were wealthy folk and had only placed their daughter in this pious household to learn a woman's work, so that she would be able to manage her own household when the time came. She was so well guarded that all my efforts to see her afterwards came to nought. . . . At last I did the right thing and gave up the attempt. Twelve years later, I met her again as a married woman in the Place Louis XV, on that day which is memorable for its stifling heat. I recognised her though she did not recognise me; and I saved her life. When she was thought to be dead, I carried her to the Tuileries, and there, under cover of darkness, satisfied my brutal lust. . . . I do not reproach myself; for it was this that brought her to life, and put her in a condition to return home. I did not dare to escort her thither, because of my crime. . . . I ceased, alas, to visit Geneviève; I might have saved her. I devoted my Sundays to my friends and to Jeannette, who had just been married quietly, with myself as one of the witnesses, or rather as taking the place of her father.

Also I often went to see my sister Margot, who wanted to find me a wife. She had another friend among her fellow-workers besides Mlle Destroches, who was a very amiable young person. I had made no secret to Margot of the change in my position; and she had talked about me to this friend who seemed to take a great interest in me. One Sunday, when I found them alone in the house, Margot took me aside and asked me what I thought of Mlle *Adélaïde Desmarais*. "The only thing one can think: that she is a sweet girl." "Would you like to make her my sister-in-law?" "With all my heart, if she will have me." "Yes, she will have you; I answer for that. So let us join her, for she and I understand each other and we can discuss the matter as friends." So we rejoined Adélaïde who, being perfectly aware of the subject of our "aside," was blushing like a rose. I asked her to let me take her hand and, when I had kissed it, I said: "Mademoiselle, if my sister has not flattered me too much, I venture to guarantee a sincere affection for you on my part." "That is all a sensible girl should wish for," she answered. "A violent passion is too soon ended." I understood what was in her mind, and told her that, in order not to feel the kind of passion she disliked, I must avoid seeing her much at close quarters. Then we talked the matter over sensibly, and made arrangements to bring about our marriage. Adélaïde came from Amiens, and she had a respectable property in a town near to it; her income was about eighteen hundred livres a year

– a fortune to me! The thought of it tranquillised my mind, and it seemed as though a part of my misfortune was repaired. This income would be enough for necessities, something would be coming to me from my parents, and I had a profession; an untroubled future opened up before me. I was almost consoled. I wrote the news to my parents, and they answered with a letter so flattering to Adélaïde that, when I showed it to her, it completely won her heart to me. I went to announce my future happiness to Mme Ponsardin, who was delighted. Such was my position at the beginning of the Autumn. Then Adélaïde, who had always been delicate, fell ill. She grew visibly worse, and wanted to marry me before her death; but my sister was opposed to this, assuring her that she would soon be better. She died after three months of suffering, and with her I lost my last hope of making a good marriage.

I was getting hardened to sorrow; moreover, as I had loved Adélaïde without passion, so I grieved for her without excess. Mme Ponsardin was more afflicted by her death than I, for, in the two or three times that she had met her, she had conceived the tenderest affection for her; and I had to comfort the sensitive Jeannette for the loss of a friend who, as she said repeatedly, would have brought sweetness to her life and mine. I noticed that our intimacy and our tears were interpreted by M. Ponsardin in a manner that was galling to him; so, without a word of explanation to Jeannette, I gave up visiting her. Thus I put myself completely in the wrong, though my only motive had been to preserve her husband's love for her: my virtue has often turned against myself.

I shall be told that I still had Rose and Marianne Tangis and others also. . . . But how enter Auxerre again? I should have died of grief; and besides there was no longer any place for me there. . . .

Loiseau's friendship was the only support left to me, but I was so made that the love, or at least the friendship, of a woman was a necessity if my heart was to be agreeably filled; deprived of women I was a nonentity, a being without vigour, energy or enterprise; in a word, without a soul. That is why I have all my life tried to win, if not the love, at least the affection of any woman who pleased me; and it has been my misfortune, as we shall see, to be nearly always betrayed in my choice, or not to be successful. I loved Loiseau, but our friendship was not yet at its full. I never went to see my sisters, for nothing drew me to them: Geneviève's pious mistresses looked at me askance, and with Margot I felt sad for Adélaïde's loss. I had forbidden myself to visit Mme Ponsardin, and I had lost all my other friends among respectable women. Shame at my ruined prospects (false shame, for Marianne still waited for me) and the hatred of M. Parangon made a return to Auxerre impossible. Yet I had to have women! So I satisfied myself with the spectre of that masterpiece of nature, and put myself in Gaudet's hands. He was an excellent fellow at bottom, but he had known and loved no one but servants at Auxerre, and his tastes were crapulous and degraded. Together we visited prostitutes; and if at times I wanted to raise myself a notch, I went in search of Boudard, who, at this time, was the favourite and lover of Mlle *Mentelles*, a little actress who was playing at the Opéra Comique in *Les Amoureuses*, and we would make up parties with her and some of her companions. I had no motive for respecting myself; no Colette, no hope of marrying a young and pretty girl to give me some regard for my own body. The most I could aspire to were the dancers at the Fair! On Sundays and holidays I went from brothel to brothel with Gaudet, looking for a girl somewhat more fresh than the miserable drabs which were our common fare. We often made discoveries, because this was our sole business, and anything can be done well enough if one concentrates on it. One day, in the *Rue Beaurepaire*, we found a young girl who had only been prostituted the day before, and she had all the signs of freshness and inexperience. As we came in, a soldier of the Guards, who had had wind of her from the "gentleman" of the house, was contending that he should have her for nothing, because (so he said) it was the right of soldiers and spies to have the pick of the girls. Swords were carried in those days, and I was wearing a long, thin one, rather like a Spanish rapier, which I had got from Molet the Mandrinist. Gaudet only had a hunting knife, but he had learned the use of arms since we had begun our life of debauchery, and seizing my sword, he provoked the soldier to combat. The women dared not cry out, because of the danger they ran if they made any noise. We piled the tables and chairs to one side, and the two champions began to fence in the open space. "Take the little girl," said Gaudet to me as he attacked: "and . . . her, while I cut off this fellow's ears!" I pushed the two women into a small closet, and held myself ready to go to my friend's help. Luckily he was victorious; he wounded the soldier's hand (I do not know how, but both of them seemed to me extraordinarily ignorant in the use of arms), and the wound bled so much that the soldier fainted. . . . Although I cannot usually look at blood, excitement buoyed me up; I bandaged his hand with compresses which the women brought, and in the evening took him to a surgeon in the neighbourhood. We remained with the young girl, and drew lots as to who should have her first. The lot fell to Gaudet. When this happened, I never followed him. An invincible repugnance and some remains of self-respect prevented me from satisfying myself with a girl who had just been in the arms of another. Gaudet knew this, and insisted that I should possess her first. I dare not describe what he did afterwards; I will only say that his actions, which resembled those of which the Gnostics of the primitive Church were falsely accused, showed to what a point Gaudet carried his idolatry of me.* I will not catalogue all our shameful adventures. They would show how dangerous is a city such as Paris to young men of strong passions and free of all control, but they would arouse disgust. Moreover, I protest that I have never joined in such debauches without being punished immediately by remorse. Returning home alone, I would groan and sigh; sometimes I would apostrophise myself aloud, so that one night I was arrested by the Guard, who thought I must be guilty of some crime that merited the scaffold. I was taken before the Commissary *Duruisseau*, who questioned me upon my exclamatory cries. I answered with a simple statement of the action I had just committed; I said that, carried away by passion, I had succumbed, and now was consumed with remorse. He listened patiently. I offered to prove my statement; but he answered that he believed me, and sent me away, saying gently: "Never stifle the voice of conscience. As long as conscience protests so loudly, the door is open for you to return to a better way of life." Commissary Duruisseau was a fine man, judging, at least, by the way in which he behaved to me. . . . I will pass on to other pleasures, slightly less crapulous, yet perhaps more dangerous.

I have said that Boudard, as the favourite of Mlle Mentelle of the

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*"*Postquam enim inter se permixti fuerint*" (*Gnostici*) "*per fornicationis affectum, insuper blasphœmiam suam in cœlum extendunt. Et suscipit quidem muliercula, itemque vir fluxum a masculo in proprias suas manus, et flant ad cœlum intuentes, et immunditiam in manibus habentes, et precantur, nimirum Stratiorici quidem et Gnostici appellati, ad Patrem, ut aiunt, universorum; offerentes ipsum hoc quod in manibus habent, et dicunt: 'Offerimus tibi, hoc donum corpus Christi, hoc est Pascha: inde patiuntur corpora nostra, et cogimur confiteri passionem Christi.*" *Eodem vero modo etiam de fœmina, ubi contigerit ipsam in sanguinis fluxu esse, menstruum collectum ab ipsa immunditiei, sanguinis acceptum in communi edunt: 'Et hic est,' inquiunt, 'sanguis Christi.'*" (*Epiph.* Contra Haeres. *T. II, lib. I.*) Here we see the origin of that devotion which, in the *Paysan-Paysanne pervertis,* I attribute to Gaudet d'Arras for Edmond, and that there I fuse the characters of Gaudet and Gaudet d'Arras.

Opéra Comique, introduced me to harlots of a better class than Gaudet's. I am only going to give one example of the parties we used sometimes to have together. . . . But first I must mention that at this time my enthusiasm for the theatre was at its height, and actors and actresses were as gods to me. Free of all obligations, I longed to become an actor, and to make my first appearance at one of the big theatres; so every spare moment was devoted to the study of certain parts: in comedy, the *valets* and in tragedy the *kings* or the *lead.* Suddenly it occurred to me that light opera would suit me better. I found this kind easy and I delighted in Vaudeville. I studied the parts of *Bourette* and *Nicaise*, in *Nicaise*; of *Alain* in *Chercheuse d'Esprit*, etc., and when I knew them, I went to see *Jean Monnet,* the director of the Opéra Comique, without confiding my design to anyone. He made me play the part of the *valet* in *Le Joueur*, which I told him I knew, and he was pleased enough; then *Orosmane* from *Zaire*, and in this (so he said) I acquitted myself even better. Then he made me sing; I had a flexible voice, with admirable low notes and an excellent upper register. . . . Then he asked: "Have you ever acted?" "No." "Well, you are not going to make your first appearance in my theatre. Join some provincial company, and come back to me in a year. . . ." I neither followed his advice nor pressed him to give me a trial. I went away at once and have never seen Jean Monnet since. Now I think it was a lucky thing for me that directors, through ignorance, pay so little heed to those promising subjects who may one day make actors such as *Lekain, Dumesnil, Saint-Huberti*, etc., for, with my sensibility and fiery impetuosity, with my sweet and beautiful voice, I should certainly have made an actor, and as certainly have disliked having the comedian *Collot* and the profligate *Contat*, etc., for my colleagues. Such was my enthusiasm for the theatre when, through the good offices of Boudard, I made one of a party with three of Jean Monnet's actresses.

First, there was Mlle Mentelle, with Boudard for her cavalier. The two others were Mlle *Baptiste*, who played the "second lover" and Mlle *Prudhomme*, principal dancer, who had joined our party by chance. The latter was only fifteen or sixteen years old, but what a practised little woman of the world! . . . Mlle Baptiste had aroused such ardent desire when I saw her play, that I gave a start of joy when I recognised her. But I found Mlle Prudhomme even prettier, and I felt my being expand deliciously at the sight of her. We took a carriage for the Bois de Boulogne. Mlle Prudhomme sat upon my knees, and Mlle Baptiste was beside me; Mlle Mentelle and Boudard were at the back. I was drunk with joy when, on getting out of the carriage, my fair companions took each an arm, thus establishing a charming familiarity between these two divinities and myself. (I was to idolise Mlle *Hus* of the Français very much more, and Mlle *Guéant* more again, but *Non licet omnibus adire Corinthum.*)

In the Bois de Boulogne Boudard walked soberly with his mistress; they were going to order dinner for three o'clock. I and my two nymphs ran on ahead of them, playing like children; while my friend, bewigged for the day, and Mlle Mentelle, in her great bonnet, looked rather like our father and mother. In fact, when they called us back to warn my companions that a group of lecherous fellows, two paces away, took them for *Misses*, Mlle Baptiste assumed a sedate air, and answered: "We will not run about any more, Mamma." "No, little Mamma!" added pretty Mlle Prudhomme, kissing her hand. Mlle Mentelle gave her a little slap on the cheek, and Boudard said severely: "And you will do well not to . . ." I heard the fellows say to each other: "What a pretty family!" "Yes, the

Mamma is still quite charming." "It makes one want to get married! To have attractive grown-up children like that and be still so young!" "Faith, if I only had such pretty sisters as that great booby!" To see Mlle Baptiste's expression when I repeated this dialogue! She gave me a slap. The booby turned round. "Mamma, my sister Jacquette has slapped me. Shall I pay it back?" "By all means, my son." "Do not pay it back, little brother, and I will love you dearly!" said my younger sister; but I had already slapped Jacquette's hand, and she went away by herself to sulk. Junie ran after her to persuade her to make friends again. "No, no, Junie, he is too ill-natured." Then I went quickly up to her and kissed her. She returned my kiss. "Charming!" said one of the fellows, "I shall get married to-morrow, or this evening. . . ."

We began to run again directly we were out of sight, doing and saying all kinds of foolish things. Among the things they said, one brought me to attention. Mlle Baptiste had just sung a verse of the well-known song:

Listen now and you shall hear
What befell a village lad:
Honesty and civil cheer,
Such of Nature's gifts I had;
Not long since I promised me
To that fair Claudène I praise,
I would serve her without fee
For a whole week's working days.
On Monday for to please her
I took my spade in hand
And all the livelong morning
I dug her garden land. . . .

I said . . . that it would give me great pleasure to "dig" both of them. Then Mlle Baptiste asked how many times I would be able to serve the two of them in the course of the afternoon. I held out a hand to each with the fingers spread. They burst out laughing, and Mlle Baptiste sang:

Rooty-tooty-tooty-toot!
I declare a ten!
Ah, ha, ha, says Catho then,
If I can follow suit!

"To the proof!" I exclaimed. "That is only fair," said Mlle Prudhomme. "Proof puts the incredulous to silence." We were among the trees, and turned aside into a retired spot where the moss was clean and soft. "Draw lots, Mesdemoiselles, and we will have one on account before dinner!" They burst into peals of laughter, but they also blushed a little, which showed they still retained some modesty even though they were actresses . . . and of the Opéra Comique! . . . However Mlle Baptiste . . . [The Reader may, perhaps, wonder why I do not speak of *la Baptiste* and *la Prudhomme* as do my brother "authors." Firstly this is because I am not a noble and, to me, they are definitely *Mademoiselle*; secondly I always address any girl or woman whom I have possessed as *Mademoiselle* or *Madame*, in token of the respect I owe to them and to myself.] . . . However Mlle Baptiste picked two blades of grass, made them of unequal length and gave them to me. These I arranged in my hand and then held them out. . . . It was Mlle Prudhomme who won the first chance. . . . She was so prettily coy that I was obliged to take her up and lay her on the moss.* According

*On the 5th of Nivôse (January the 4th, 1795) I met a puritan at the *Maison-d'Égalité* (Palais-Royal), and he said to me: "You should feel great remorse for having written the *Paysan parvenu*! It is a most immoral work. A man should never forgive himself for having written a book like that!" "Have you read it, citizen?" "Yes, a long time ago." "About twenty-five years ago, I should think, as you have even forgotten the title." "It is full of lecherous descriptions which make vice attractive." "Excuse me, I omitted all such descriptions, simply to avoid rousing the passions." "Oh, but there are some!" "Give me an example." "Excuse me, but I did to our agreement, Mlle Baptiste had to stand on guard. So she rose and kept a look-out in every direction, while I gave her friend a preliminary "proof." And the young dancer was well satisfied with my performance. I was only her tenth . . . and she gave me exquisite pleasure! We rose and joined Mlle Baptiste, who was looking after the wraps. "Your turn, my beautiful!" I said. "Oh fie, this has a flavour of debauchery. It is worse than those wantons . . . of the *Grand-Opéra*. . . ." I led her to the battle-

not read it yesterday evening." "There are none; but if there were, the book was written for fathers of families." "A fine excuse for having written a wicked book!" Then he mentioned *Dom B.* "I used to know *Gervaise*, the author," he added, "and he meant no harm by the book. . . . He wrote it in his youth." "And did he mean any good?" The lawyer (for such was his profession) stuttered . . . then returning impetuously to his attack on the *Paysan perverti* (which he called *parvenu*), he exclaimed: "So you wrote that book for fathers of families! Let them read it by all means; but have you kept track of every copy to see who gets hold of it? Servants give it to children, doctors take it to young people so as to get more patients. . . ." After these unlikely statements – that servants would give a book costing a louis to their young masters to excite them into going to bed with them, and that doctors, who are usually as honourable as they are useful, would hawk it about for the most execrable motives – the lawyer was silent for the first time, for we had both been talking at once. . . . Then I said: "And I, citizen censor, denounce a far more dangerous class of criminals, the cutlers! They make great cutlasses – to carve off sirloins and legs of mutton, so they say; but, the villains! they do not keep track of every knife they sell: a bad man stabs with one, a robber does murder with another! A law quickly, to suppress cutlery, and condemn any who make knives to death!" All our hearers burst out laughing. And the lawyer, who had not read the *Paysan-Paysanne pervertis*, but only the *Paysan parvenu*, was not abashed. . . .

I have already risen against puritans, these tyrants of mankind, these infamous Robespierres who would have everything drab and icy as their own cold hearts. It was Robespierre who, through Chaumette, forbade prostitution, without taking any steps to counterbalance this prohibition. For prostitution is natural: bitches, cows, ewes, hinds, she-wolves, hens and the rest all prostitute themselves; but mankind does it in the most odious way, and makes of it a sin and an abuse. A simple prohibition is not enough to counteract this natural instinct, in a country wherein men acquire a wife very late, and then only one, who has her lyings-in and illnesses, etc. (see my *Pornographe*). Puritans are no more than stupid children in questions of morality. But there is another thing which never occurs to them: that happiness is everything to the Human Race, and if, which is impossible, virtue is opposed to happiness, then virtue must be proscribed. But only the counterfeit virtue of the puritan is opposed to happiness; virtue itself can never be so.

field, and she had the art to make difficulties enough to revive all my ardour. I triumphed . . . and very easily; for Mlle Baptiste was nearly twenty and had played at the Opéra Comique for at least six years.

When the second "proof" had been given, we rejoined Boudard and his sweetheart, who were looking about for us and had already called us several times. "You are mad!" exclaimed Mlle Mentelle to her companions. "That really was not prudent." "Oh, we kept a look-out, turn and turn about." "Turn and turn about? What, both of you?" "Lud! *One* would have cut a pretty figure! It would have been the same as when I made my first appearance at the Grand-Opéra in the part of confidant: while my mistress was putting on airs and stringing phrases, I did not know what to do: I pissed . . . I pissed all over my garters! . . ." Sweet Prudhomme blushed and did not open her mouth, which was unusual in a dancer. It seemed to me that such women were bound to be shameless; it is how they exist. Otherwise they would lose their character and cease to please. . . . I was already far gone in corruption! . . . My two nymphs and I began to run again; I led the hunt and, finding another pleasant place, I said to my beauties, pointing to the moss: "What a bed! What a delightful spot! It invites one to wield the pencil!" "An excellent idea!" exclaimed Mlle Baptiste. . . . "Will you begin, or shall I?" Mlle Prudhomme did not see fit to lose her turn. . . . Mlle Baptiste had hers a quarter of an hour later. Then, without allowing them to escape, I gave them a fifth and sixth "proof." After this we rejoined the lovers. "He is incredible!" said Mlle Baptiste. . . . "He will manage it, Prudhomme, he will manage it!" "Beware of those two madcaps, Monsieur Nicolas," said Mlle Mentelle with a slight smile, "if you do not want to come home on a stretcher!" "I beware?" I answered vaingloriously. . . .

We went in search of dinner. My prowess was vaunted at table; they could speak of nothing else. The dinner was excellent and I was hungry; they pretended to give me double helpings of the rice soup and water fowl and I played up to them. We were nearly three hours at table.

I rose at last just as Mlle Baptiste was beginning a song which has since become very popular, but was then only in manuscript. She attributed it to Mlle Arnould, who had just joined the Opéra. . . . I touched Mlle Prudhomme with my knee, but she did not get up quickly enough; Mlle Baptiste had noticed my movement, and was ahead of her rival. Prudhomme exclaimed: "Fie, you cheat!" but Baptiste was not to be put off by a reproach, and she had her proof. Vexed at this injustice, Prudhomme joined us immediately after to complain about her friend. "I have been sparing myself," I whispered. "Prelude a little . . ." And she did . . . ah, like one of the Grand-Opéra girls! She was forced to agree that she had lost nothing by waiting. . . . We all went back together.

Desert was being served; then we had liqueurs, of which I drank little. Mlle Baptiste began her song again. Pretty Prudhomme, so as not to be forestalled a second time, gave the signal herself. I disappeared with her, and she did not return until after she had had her last proof. All was done in silence, and the others pretended not to have noticed anything. Mlle Baptiste, who had again stopped her song during our absence, recommenced.

When you go for a drink to the Ass
You oughtn't to wriggle your fiddle-de-dee,
When you go for a drink to the Ass
You oughtn't to wriggle your arse.

Say, have you heard what happened to
Mademoiselle Manon Frélu?

I saw it myself, and I'll tell you:
    Regular Princess she would be
Though only a bare-breech how-d'ye-do.
When you go . . .

As soon as ever she gets to the ken
She seats herself on the bench, and then
Finds it too hard for her four-by-ten.
    She wants a Duchess's stool, you see,
Does this petticoat-tailless guinea-hen.
When you go . . .

And a table with its stand won't fit,
Too long or too broad for her to sit,
And you can't easily soften it:
    Dog me, how delicate she can be!
It bores a fellow above a bit.
When you go . . .

"Spill us a pint, a pint, my love . . .
And let it be of the proper stuff.
Fie, what company, heavens above!"
    "Is it by playing the giggamaree
I've put your honour in such a huff?"
When you go . . .

"How hold these glasses dirty as pitch
When I can't see which end is which?"
"Take care, my little needle-and-stitch,
    Aren't you afraid of such as he?
It's sitting by him we get the itch."
When you go . . .

"Now would she like to take the floor?"
"Certainly not, you clumsy boor,"
She said as her hand away she tore
    And impolitely quitted me.

Ah, then you should have heard me roar
When you go . . .

So many times I brought her bale
I made her home-sweet-home turn pale. . . .
A word to the wise may now avail:
What we men need's simplicity
And above all a rounded tail.
When you go . . .

Mlle Baptiste slipped away during the applause, which was accorded to her both as an actress and a singer; but she had no time to get further than the first room. There I caught her and, in spite of her resistance (for the windows were open), paid her the compliment that she had thought impossible.

Then, a very Bacchante, she returned to celebrate my powers with a loud *Evoe*! . . . She insisted that I should be crowned with myrtle (fortunately a neighbouring gardener had some trees in pots); Mlle Prudhomme presented the crown on bended knees to Mlle Mentelle, who set it upon my head in the name of Venus. . . . Thus we left the restaurant, and I was led to our carriage, crowned and supported by nymphs like another Anacreon. . . . More than five hundred people witnessed this last scene in the drama, but, not knowing the reason for it, they thought it no more than an imitation of the festivals of the ancients, and perhaps it was just that. . . .

In the carriage Mlle Baptiste said to me bluntly: "You know that your friend is Mentelle's kept man; you must be mine. I offer my friendship, my purse, and my person!" I phrased my thanks ambiguously. . . . To my shame I must confess that it was my preference for Mlle Prudhomme only that saved me from accepting this shameful position; if the offer had come from her, then goodbye to my last remains of delicacy! I should have accepted, and been enrolled among the vile and filthy rabble of kept men! . . . When some days had elapsed without a sight of me, Baptiste told Mentelle that I was a fool, and preferred youth to a more substantial offer, as though I were a great noble instead of a fancy man.

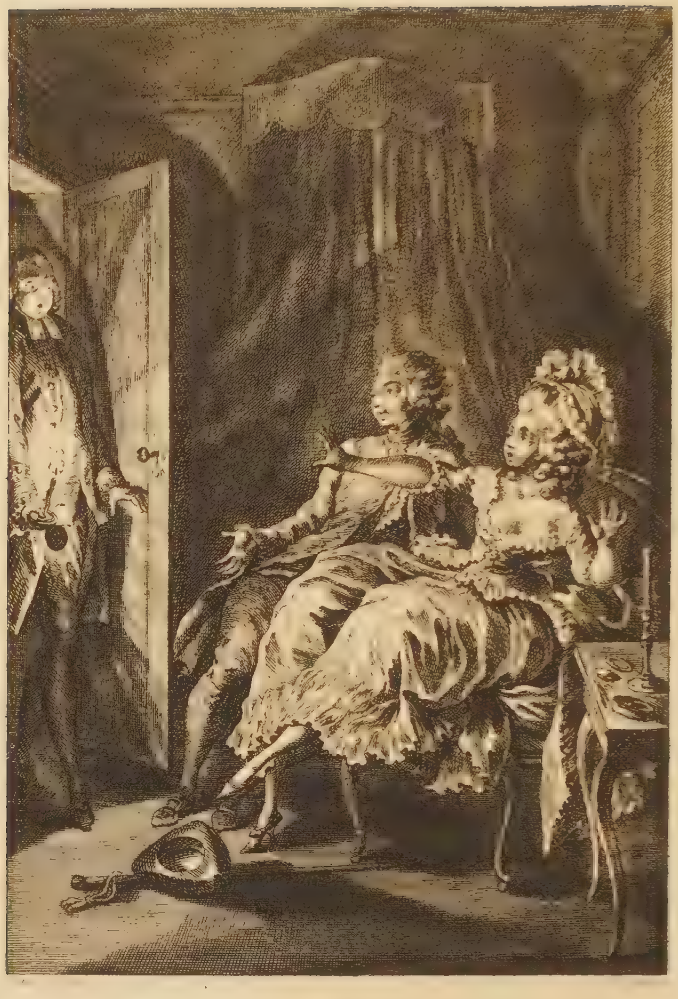
Such was this party, to which I had already alluded: it thrust me finally into the sink of debauchery; it weakened my grief for Colette the virtuous, leaving nothing but regret for a pretty woman; it made me neglect good Jeannette Ponsardin, whose conversation always seemed to revive innocence in my heart. I no longer went to see my sisters Geneviève and Margot; or their friends amongst whom I might have found some good women: one or other of the sisters Destroches, for example. But these girls were just mortals to me, whereas I was mixing with goddesses! This enthusiasm of mine was to last a long time; but I have only described this scandalous adventure to blush for it – at sixty years of age!

I lost sight of my friends of the Opéra Comique, for it came to an end and Mlle Prudhomme went to dance at the *Hague* (I was to see her again, however), and I was left with no taste for anything but bold and extravagant adventures. Two of these are amalgamated in the *Paysan-Paysanne pervertis* (for most of Edmond's misdeeds belong to me), but here I must give them separately as they happened.

For some time my attention had been attracted by a little dressmaker's girl, who came home in the evening to sleep in her parents' apartment on the fourth floor of a house opposite the Oratory. This house is not set back as are the others, and it has been occupied for sixty or seventy years by the Widow *Bonnedame*, who keeps a jeweller's shop and is the only person in Paris who has lived to see one complete generation of shopkeepers give place to the next. This little workgirl returned every evening at half-past nine, and a plan for the most audacious and at the same time most criminal assault on her came into my head. I will relate the incident for the information of parents and magistrates. One evening, when I saw her coming, I hid on the staircase between the second and third floors; there was a high wind, and I guessed that her candle would be blown out. And this happened. As she was passing me, I took an unmistakeable liberty. She did not cry out, and from this I knew that she must have a lover. . . . She sat down. But, fairly sure as I was that she was taking me for someone else whom she loved, this position did not save her. I wanted to see how far he had gone; so I lifted her in my arms and placed her to my fancy. Master of the position, I stimulated my conquest and sought complete happiness. A laborious but thorough victory told me that the lover had not so far completely triumphed and that I was profiting by his preliminary lessons, so that his efforts to corrupt had turned against himself. The girl pushed me away or helped me, without uttering a sound. . . . As I reached the climax, I heard someone coming upstairs, but fortunately without a candle. I let him come quite near to us, pressing back against the wall with the girl. The person passed, and from a signal he gave I realised that he was the lover. I let go the girl I had just vintaged and pretended, for her benefit, to go downstairs. The girl whispered to the newcomer: "I hear someone." "He is going downstairs," answered the gallant. "But there was someone coming upstairs." "It was I." "Ah, but you have only just come up, and someone else is going down. I must know who it is, it is important. . . . I thought it was you. . . . Go and look, go and look! . . ." The gallant came downstairs, and I slipped into a privy, and crouched there until he returned. The girl came in to piss, probably through a natural instinct to hide the traces of her recent encounter. . . . "I can't see anyone," said the gallant. "Ah, my God, who was it then? I thought it was you!" "No. . . . What did he do to you?" "The same as you do." "Anything else?" "He put his hand under . . ." "And then?" "An experienced hand . . . on everything, everywhere." "Only the hand?" "I do not know anyone in the house capable of insulting me. . . . Listen, I will go back to my mistress's alone, on the pretext of fetching something that I have forgotten; and I shall stay there a quarter of an hour. You come out after me, and when I return, watch if anyone follows me or looks at me. If anyone comes in after me, shut the outer door, so that my father and brother can catch him." On this I slipped silently downstairs, and as the lover asked a few more questions, I had time to reach the door. I took up my stand on the opposite side of the street. The girl appeared, looked about her, and then went on to her employer; after her came a pretty young coxcomb, whose appearance relieved me of any vestige of remorse. He put himself on guard at the entrance, which abuts on the Oratory. I walked past him and, pretending that I was talking to someone else, said right in his face: "I am delighted to have cheated that effeminate fool out of his flower!" I saw the girl go in; her spark followed her and shut the door. But he was not safely home yet! I knocked four times heavily on the gate in order to bring down the father and brother, and a moment later, he came flying through the door with both men after him. I pointed out the passage-way to the seamstress's house, where I had stood on watch the day before and where he had now taken refuge. They seized him, dragged him out, recognised him, and took him to the Watch. The girl was taken there too, and her lover was dismissed. I went home laughing maliciously, as one laughs at a Comedy.

Next day, when I passed at the usual hour, I saw my jackanapes in the seamstress's doorway; he was carrying a short loaded stick under his silk coat, and had no objection to its being seen. The dressmaker's girl came out of Mme Guisland's shop, three shops below the Rue d'Orléans. I went to meet her, and accosted her: "You live in Mme Bonnedame's house, Mademoiselle?" "Yes . . . Monsieur." "You were insulted yesterday evening, Mademoiselle?" She blushed. "Mademoiselle, I beg you to tell the young man standing at the seamstress's passage-way door that it was I who had the happiness to replace him yesterday; and that I will wait for him in front of the *Colonnade du Louvre* . . . whence we will go where he likes. . . . I will give him all the information that he may desire as from man to man. . . ." The girl listened trembling, and when I made a movement as if to accompany her, she exclaimed quickly: "Monsieur, do not come with me!" I left her with a respectful bow, and waited in ambush to see what would happen. The lovers went in together, and I did not see anyone come out again. I was curious, so I passed through the entry and went quietly upstairs. From their conversation I gathered that the girl had not said a word about our meeting; and hence concluded that it would greatly displease her if I addressed her lover. As they went on talking I saw that she had given him to understand that the insult had been a mere trifle. . . . At this moment the girl's father opened his door and she went in. The father came down with his light, and her spark slid the length of the banisters. I rang a bell on the second floor, which belonged to a kept woman whom I had just seen go out. The father held the light right in my face, and said: "She is not in." I thanked him, and went downstairs with him. He asked if I had met anyone. "No, but I had a fine fright! Something slid all the way down the banisters and fell at the bottom, pouff!" He took me for a fathead, and shut the outside door on my heels. . . . The fop was at his usual place. I went straight up to him, and he took to his legs and was off. I have often seen this girl since, but never spoken to her.

The second adventure was of the same kind. One evening while I was amusing myself by watching the assignations of the girl who lived in Mme Bonnedame's house, I noticed another Beauty in a dressmaker's shop at the corner of the *Rue du Coq*, which at this time was a blind alley. I waited till she came out in order to find out more about her. After she had completed her purchase she went into the sign of the *Peacock*, a pastrycook's shop in the *Rue de Grenelle*, lighted her candle, which was enclosed in a little paper lantern, and started for the stairs. Owing to the angle at which they stand, the passage-way to this house joins that to the Bonnedame house at the far end, so that there is a strong draught down both of them. The wind blew out my charmer's candle, and knowing now where she lived, I slipped up the passage-way while she was in the shop relighting it. My intention was only to see her closer and find out on which floor she lived, so that I could write to her if I had the whim to do so. But the Boreas of the Bonnedame alley extinguished her candle again, and, growing impatient, she came upstairs without it. She met me between the first floor and the second, where she lived. She touched my coat and said in a low whisper: "Is that you, Abbé?" "Yes, yes," I answered in the same tone. "You are punctual! Come in quietly, because my aunt is at home." We went in together and she began feeling her way to the chimneypiece in search of a match. . . . I reflected that a light would be prejudicial to me, so took her in my arms and carried her to the bed, the position of which I could guess at from the outside light, which was reflected in a mirror. She gave me happiness after making a few difficulties; since she only yielded for the sake of the generous way in which "I" had behaved



to her during the preceding week: "My aunt is so miserly! . . . She has reduced me to this! . . . She feeds *me* well enough, but she! . . . just imagine! . . . she eats the Oratory rats! . . . She pays the porter a ha'penny each for the big ones . . . and a farthing for the little ones. . . . I will show you something I have just bought. . . . It . . . haye! . . . gently! . . . will be charming! . . Oh! . . . I have . . . already . . . had one like it . . . and my aunt . . . who . . . has nothing . . . will think . . . it is the same . . . made over. . . . Haye! haye! haye! . . . Gently! . . . gently! . . . Good lord, if she were to hear me! . . ." She controlled herself, not without difficulty, and I reached my goal. . . .

The business finished, begun again, and finally ended, my charmer began to look for the matches. She found one and plunged it among the ashes covering the fire and withdrew it alight. I made for the door and, while she was having difficulties with the long wick of the candle, opened it and slipped downstairs without her seeing me. . . . I left the passage-way just as a plump, natty little abbé was getting out of his carriage. I bowed profoundly and he slipped furtively up the passage.* His carriage moved on to turn, so I followed lightly after him. I overheard his greeting. "Ah" (in a very low whisper), "have you been to call your carriage?" "I have told my coachman to turn. . . . I want to talk to you, my Beauty." "Delighted. If my aunt comes in, you can go in there" (pointing to the alcove). "I should like very much to talk to you . . . for a little. . . . Eh! Tata has gone out, and I thought she was in her room! . . . You never said a word to me just now!" "When?" "Before you went downstairs." "I have only just come." "But you came up . . . with me?" "No, I did not. I came up alone." "But I recognised you on the staircase; I touched

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*See *Paysan-Paysanne pervertis,* 41st illustration.

you, and said: *Is that you, Abbé?* and you answered, *Yes*, and we came up together. . . . You went out just as I was lighting the candle." "It was not I!" exclaimed the abbé. "It was a thief! I saw a rascal come out of your passage as I was getting out of my carriage, and he bowed to me profoundly." The girl had her wits about her, and cried out: "We have been robbed! . . . He came into the room. . . . But, yes . . . I have been robbed . . . thoroughly robbed! . . . What will my aunt say?" I thought it was time to be off for fear of accident. I found the abbé's two servants on the passage step, and saluted them almost as respectfully as I had saluted their master. They made way for me politely enough; but a couple of minutes after and it would have been too late. From the entrance to the grocer's opposite I saw the abbé talking to them eagerly. He imitated my salute to himself, they imitated mine to them, and then the abbé went upstairs again. I made my escape. . . . I never saw this girl again until I met her ten years later in the *Rue du Petit-Lion-Saint-Sauveur*; she moved a few days after our adventure, for I found her apartment empty.

I followed these two blackguardly actions with a third even more fatal to my morals and no less criminal. We know that all Bonne Sellier's boarders were her husbands. This was included in her terms for board and lodging, as if it were part of her agreement to satisfy all our needs. . . . And yet those blockheads who go travelling among savages, and see the inside of one home for every tribe they visit, give us the results of their observation as though these applied to the customs of the people as a whole! It is as though I were to tell foreigners or even my fellow-countrymen: *In Paris it is the rule for all the men in a boarding-house, even if there are thirty of them, to have full rights over their hostess's favours* . . . only I should have better grounds for my statement than some of these travellers for theirs, for I have seen this custom, not only at Bonne Sellier's and with Mme Lallemand, but in the house of a Mme *Debus*, who also took in printers. In this house the mother and two grown-up daughters served as bed-warmers to all their boarders. I have also seen the same thing in a house for students in law and medicine at the top of the *Rue des Carmes, Cour d'Albret.* There were four women in this household: the grandmother, the mother, and two daughters. The grandmother was still appetising, for she came of a good family; the mother, who had been a widow for a long time, was a beautiful woman; the eldest daughter was a charming young person of nineteen, and Madelon, the youngest, was a tender girl of fourteen. The grandmother had the newcomers for the first fortnight: such was the rule of the house. Thus, for the first fifteen days, it was the grandmother who came to make your bed while you were still in it, and stimulated you so efficiently that you were tempted by the fine remains of her beauty. And these were luscious enough: a white bosom, a beautifully turned leg, displayed to the knee in stooping, and a plump, voluptuous backside, wantonly used. . . . When the hostesses saw that you were fitting into the ways of the house, the mother came to do your room. You had her for some time, and your way of behaving with her decided whether you should have the girls: a rough customer never got beyond the grandmother, who thus protected the mother; likewise the latter saved her eldest daughter from anyone at all doubtful. But after a proper young man had had the mother for some time and conducted himself with decency, the eldest daughter would come to make his bed, clad in a provocative undress which outlined her body. She would coquette a little, but at last, if she was satisfied with his manners and sentiments, she would make him happy. . . . A man had to be a masterpiece of worth and propriety to win through to the little girl of fourteen. The child was adorned for the contest; the happy man provided a fine collation, at the end of which he was told; "You are the friend of the house, and worthy to possess the *houri*; we will leave her with you for one hour." Then the mothers withdrew. All these pleasures took place in the day, never at night: you could get nothing except at the time for making the bed. And it was all quite disinterested! They asked for nothing, and cheerfully accepted the merest trifle. In the evening they provided the boarders with an entertainment which young provincials much appreciate: they would invite some girl bookbinders and stitchers, with nothing of the prude about them, and have dancing in the ground floor parlour, from nine o'clock till eleven on ordinary days and till midnight on Saturdays and Sundays. The music cost nothing: there was always some boarder who could play the violin, and often he was accompanied by several others; the boarders could bring their friends to this daily ball. I stayed ten months in this house in 1768. . . . But let us go back to Mme Lallemand, who played the leading part in the next adventure that I am going to relate; and we shall see why she was so interested in Jeannette and the danger that the latter ran in the Rue Saint-Julien-le Pauvre.

Mme Lallemand had gone back to live in the *Rue Jacinthe*, at the corner of the *Rue Galande*. The ground floor of this house was occupied by a coffee-house and the owner's wife, a beautiful brunette, had an unnatural predilection which I had never before met in a woman. I had not seen my former hostess since I left her house; and yet she was a pretty woman whom I could have had for nothing. At last we met one day, and she reproached me in friendly fashion for my neglect. I never went to taverns, but on that particular evening I ran across Boudard, and we adjourned to the one on the corner opposite this coffee house, rather for the sake of seclusion (because of the risky nature of his work) than to drink. We had only been a few minutes behind our partition, when we heard two people enter the box next to ours. We held our tongues. "It is Madame Lallemand," whispered friend Boudard, "with Leblanc, one of her former boarders." The conversation opened with reproaches. Then came a reconciliation. Finally the table or chairs began to creak. "That is how all her quarrels end," said Boudard. "Let us go." But what I had just heard had excited me. It was Monday and I went that very evening to see this wanton with the idea of suggesting something to eat and at the same time profiting by her extreme facility. However, I did not arrive till half-past six and it was then too late; so we chatted and, directly she had dismissed the little servant, I knelt at her feet. I was very bold: I told her that I loved her, and she answered with a phrase which I have often quoted since to my friends: *"Ah, my God, why did you not tell me sooner!"* She added, as if after reflection: "At first, when your sister Ponsardin was here, I thought you were pious; but you have proved yourself a thoroughly good fellow since. . . ." We agreed to meet at five o'clock next day, and I left her before her boarders came in, having tasted some appetising samples of favours to come.

On Tuesday I was very early. I arrived at three o'clock instead of at five. The kitchen door was open, and there was no one to be seen; the little servant, knowing that her mistress was very much engaged, had gone out for a gossip. The key was not in the door of the front room, but I could see a crack of light; so I pushed it with my finger and it yielded. I entered quietly. I have always possessed the gift of moving lightly in a supreme degree. (On Septidi the 7th of Nivôse, at the age of sixty, I was the only person to traverse the street of the horse-pond, between *Place Maubert* and the *Maison d'Égalité*, without falling, and I made the journey twice.*) Although the curtain was bashfully drawn across the glazed door to the back-room, I caught a glimpse of shadows moving. I inferred that Mme Lallemand was with a gallant and was somewhat surprised that an assignation as much to the point as ours should not be enough for her; but I was quite pleased to have an anecdote that I could tell Boudard without betraying any trust. . . . I went up to the door, and heard the sound of kisses. Then one of the people, who was moving energetically, disarranged the curtain with her foot; and I saw . . . two women! They were Mme Lallemand and her neighbour Mme *Beugnet*, the pretty owner of that coffee house which we have already seen from the corner of the *Rue du Fouarre*. . . . (Her husband had been a foreman, wood engraver, etc., and I had already a little coveted her when passing by her shop.) My former hostess was devouring her white, firm, naked breasts with kisses, while two licentious hands were mutually busy. . . . My surprise could scarcely have been equalled, but I simply concluded that pretty *Maximine Márie* was a woman of temperament, who dared not risk a lover because of a jealous husband; and, in this conviction, turned the handle of the glazed door and went in. . . . The two women uttered a piercing scream. . . . I reassured them, and offered my ardent homage to the fair lemonade seller, expressing myself in a manner that squared with my erroneous opinion. Her answers were quite unintelligible to me, but Mme Lallemand explained the matter. "Zounds!" I exclaimed. "You are defrauding nature . . . and, by Venus, you shall be mounted by a man!" And I made this a condition of my future reticence. . . . I would listen to nothing; they had to yield. Mme Beugnet took first turn, because she did not want me to have

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*Apparently a day remembered for its frozen streets. [Ed.]

Mme Lallemand; but throughout the business the two women were caressing each other, and, at the end, agreed that it was a new relish which they had never tried before. . . . (Reader, I portray what I have seen and done. A new Petronius, I hide nothing from you. Know the age in which you live, or rather, know every age! The passions and their aberrations are always the same; they always produce the same effects. No sooner is man civilised than he develops factitious tastes; no sooner does he live in plenty than these magnify, and he becomes what we mean by the word *profligate.* I must be honest; I must tell everything. Some passages will perhaps be cut out of this manuscript; but my duty remains the same. How could my object be fulfilled if, through regard for puritans and in order not to frighten fools, I suppressed my vices and represented a sham man instead of a real one? Of what use should I be? With pretty stories I could amuse our womanish manlings and our little Catos, who are virtuous for want of feeling or physical potency. But I should instruct no one. . . . In this age of Robespierres and puritans, one is forced to insist to weariness on these simple points.)

I provided money for a collation, which Mme Lallemand fetched as she could not find the little servant. While she was away Mme Beugnet told me frankly, with reference to certain suggestions of mine, that she could have more men than she wanted to satisfy her needs; but that her natural taste was for pretty women, who were "visited" by a good many men, because they had physical sensibility and never fell in love. She added that she had fallen madly in love with a pretty kept woman who lived near by (*Spirette*), because she knew that she was betraying the man who kept her. When I told her that I could not understand her at all, this Lesbian described all the byways of her perverse and guilty passion, in phrases so vivid and revolting, that, in a moment, she extinguished all desire for her charms. For the rest of my visit, I wanted only Mme Lallemand; but when I tried to caress her, Beugnet snatched her passionately from me, and we ended by being well on the way to fighting in good earnest.

Thus I drifted lower and lower, and went from shame to shame, until I reached the bottom of the abyss of debauchery. I had lost my soul, the support of my tottering virtue; I had lost *Her* who, at least at times, had made me respect myself; and I had not yet given myself utterly into the arms of virtuous friendship. There were only two steps wanting to complete my degradation: to be infected through debauch and to be paid by a prostitute. The first I took, but the second . . . never! never! It has always filled me with horror! . . . However, I was to have my moment of triumph before my final abasement.

It was on the 15th of June, 1756, that I first saw Mlle *Guéant* (that beautiful actress of the Français) in *Les Dehors Trompeurs* and *La Pupille.* I fell hopelessly in love with her in the latter part: I used to wait outside the theatre, to see her once more and marvel at her waist, her ravishing face and her beautiful foot; I would watch her get into her carriage or sedan chair and then follow her to see her get out of it again. One evening (in the month of July 1757) I had to follow her a long way; finally she stopped at the *Hôtel de Hollande*, where a party was being held. While I was watching with hungry eyes the fair Guéant descending from her chair into the courtyard, I heard a not unknown voice exclaim behind me: "Junie, Junie! There he is!" Junie was Mlle Prudhomme. She asked me if I would like to come in, and for answer I seized her hand and kissed it. So she took me with her, and we went upstairs with the beautiful Guéant. I expressed my admiration of her to Junie, who answered: "Yes, she is beautiful, and good!" At this remark I kissed the hem of Guéant's dress. A Colonel of Dragoons, who had come from the Embassy to meet her, noticed my gesture, and pointed me out to her, saying: "Mademoiselle, there is one of your admirers." The fair woman looked at me, and remembered that she had often seen me. I had just come from the theatre, so I was well enough dressed in a lustring suit. "Apparently you are one of us, Monsieur," she said, smiling at me, "for I see that you are with Mlle Prudhomme." "Mlle Prudhomme was kind enough to bring me," I answered, "but I am only an amateur, and enchanted to find myself where I can have the pleasure of looking at you for a little while longer." Mlle Guéant smiled again, saying: "One is not to be pitied with such a sponsor!" We entered a room which was later the Beaumarchais billiard room. There I saw Mlle Hus, less beautiful than Guéant, but most seductive; Mlle *Hallard*, at this time a light slim girl; Mlle *Arnould*, that charming actress who played the part of *Psyche* in the *Fêtes de Paphos* with so much feeling; young *Rosalie Levasseur* of the *Comédie Italienne*, escorted by a fashionable Abbé; and *Camargo*, leading dancer at the Français, with a vulgar and most unpleasant-looking fop. Junie hailed Rosalie and Camargo: "You have a man each; this is mine." This unexpected party had taken me quite by surprise; but Junie's attentions gave me courage. Mlle Prudhomme spoke to Mme *Favard* who was sitting next me at table; I did not hear what she said, but the latter laughed heartily and went over and repeated it to Mlles Arnould, Hallard, and Hus. They stared at each other, and made signs which were noticed by the men, who wanted to know what it was all about. "Oh, nothing," answered young Arnould, and when they insisted: "We were only hearing about the *Labours of Hercules*; but you know neither the legend nor the anecdote." Then I understood, and blushed modestly. Hallard, after whispering with Junie, said aloud: "That is worth doing: I will bring him to you, *Guimard.*" No more was said. . . . Supper with these fairies was enchanting. But I was not happy: I saw no one, desired no one, but Guéant; and she was a long way away from me. Prudhomme guessed what was in my mind, and said as much aloud to her companions. "Such are men!" remarked Camargo somewhat acidly. "Hum! If I had anything to do with them . . . I would punish them. . . ." And she soon did punish me. . . .

When this delicious supper was finished, Rosalie, who in spite of her extreme youth had already an admirable voice, sang some ballads; then Arnould sang *Pâles Flambeaux*; Hus played the scene in which she is chased in a petticoat by *M. de Pourceaugnac*; Mlle Guéant gave us the Letter Scene from *La Pupille*; Mme Favard sang the parody of the *laughter* scene from the *Servante-Maîtresse*; Guimard, Hallard, Prudhomme and Camargo the Second* attempted the Ballet from the *Medea*, since played at the *Théâtre de l'Opéra*; a poet named *Robbé* recited a composition of his own entitled *Origénisme* (the Prince de Conti had paid him twenty thousand francs not to print it); *Piron*† made us shudder with his recitation of the *Ode to Priapus*, etc. Finally, it was my turn, and someone asked me what I would do; I think it was *Moncenigo*,‡ the Venetian Ambassador, who plays such an odious part with Ursule in the *Paysan-Paysanne.* I had not expected this. The Italian, seeing that I was with a young dancer, took me for an actor. Prudhomme egged me on, saying: "Come, come, you have deeds and achievements to your credit; you can pay for your place as well as another." I verily believe that the little rogue was trying to make me relate my prowess with her and Mlle Baptiste! She did not know that I had had another adventure which was much more striking from every point of view. Then Mlle Guéant said graciously: "Will you not give us something, Monsieur?" To me this was an order not to be disobeyed. I said that I would willingly pay for my place, if I could count on the indulgence of my audience. All the women exclaimed: "Yes, yes." "I am young and inexperienced, and have no talents; and you have just been entertained by the first actors and actresses in Europe, and have listened to our Masters in Literature. . . . I shall appear but poor stuff after these!" (Universal applause, even from the Italian.) "What small acquaintance I have with society, I owe to Mademoiselle" (pointing to Prudhomme: applause and a grimace from the Venetian). "For myself, I can only offer a sensitive heart and certain adventures, of which one may perhaps exercise the sagacity of this illustrious company. . . ." "You are going to hear about it!" interrupted Junie, addressing her companions. . . . "For I have since had certain information, not as to the identity of the heroine, of this I am completely ignorant, but as to her high station." (Here Prudhomme's pretty face lengthened, and the attention of the audience redoubled.) I related my adventure in La Macé's house in 1756, softening it down considerably. I spoke of the carriage I had seen the next morning, but I was very careful not to describe the liveries. My narrative was greeted with applause in which even the Italian joined, seeing that Prudhomme was not its heroine.

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*The famous Camargo, who was so great a pioneer in the art of dancing, was born in 1710, and had left the stage in 1751, though she lived to 1770, and other dancers apparently made use of her name. She had an undistinguished sister, Sophie. [Ed.]

†Piron, in spite of his *Ode to Priapus*, still occupies a fairly honourable place in the history of French literature, but Robbé, a writer of satire and erotic verse of a low order which amused his own age at the supper table, has now been forgotten. [Ed.]

‡Giovanni Mocenigo (to give him his correct name) was Venetian Ambassador in Paris until recalled in 1754, but remained in Paris until his death in 1756 through falling down his own staircase, though other stories are told. Casanova knew him, and he had various mistresses, especially amongst opera dancers. Restif's memory seems to have played him false. [Ed.]

But Junie was determined that nothing should be wasted, so, while the men discussed the lady's identity (they thought she must be either the Duchesse d'Orléans or the Duchesse Mazarin, but she was neither the one nor the other), Junie told the story of our picnic in the Bois de Boulogne.

It was nearly four o'clock in the morning; and the authors and every serious-minded person had left. Only the Venetian remained. Then Junie said: "Now for the climax!" And all the women, with the exception of Guéant, shouted: "The climax!" I watched the making of certain arrangements the reason for which I did not understand; Prudhomme, Camargo, Rosalie, and the other conspirators (I think in collusion with the Venetian) gave everyone their places and then took their own. . . . Then all at once, with theatrical effect, the lights went out. Some one put a hand in mine; this hand pulled me along and gave me another hand. . . . I did what I was hearing all about me, upon her whose hand had been given me. . . . What an orgy! It was worthy of that evil Italian, that gambler and cheat, who has since perished by the order of the Council of Ten, and he was seriously taken to task for his part in it by the Dutch Ambassador. . . . We were in darkness for an hour and all that time I had the same person, who seemed to me most loving! It was not Junie. I had noticed that a long ribbon was fastened by a slip knot to my arm. Someone tugged at it, I followed, and found myself in the courtyard with Junie. "Go, at once!" she said. "You have had Guéant: I wanted you to have her, because I could not have you myself without endangering us both, and because I saw that you were obsessed by her! . . . She does not know; but it is necessary that you should. . . . And, I shall tell her too. . . . Go, in case of accidents. You liked me better than Baptiste; I was flattered, and this is the way I have rewarded you. . . . Goodbye, goodbye!" I threw my arms about her neck and embraced her with such genuine ardour that, as the door of the little office on the ground floor (since occupied by Gudin) gave way behind me, I proved my gratitude in the only way within my power. . . . We were caught by the Colonel, Mlle Guéant's lover, and this produced an excellent effect, as he thought we had been there all the time. . . . Pretty Prudhomme left me, and I have never seen her again. I heard afterwards that she told Mlle Guéant who had been her partner, and added that, when she had seen the Colonel coming downstairs, she had let herself be caught apparently in the act with me, so as to remove every trace of what had really happened: this she said to protect me from any suspicion of indelicacy. Let us go on now to my mishap. It also came about through actresses and this unpremeditated party.

A week later I was walking down the *Rue Mazarine* after leaving the Comédie Française, when I heard a light step behind me. I looked round, and there was Camargo; she had seen me ahead of her and had quickened her pace to overtake me. I saluted her in the most proper manner, and walked by her side. "So it is you? And how do you come to be at the theatre to-day, when Mlle Guéant is not playing?" I told her that I had come to see the tragedy and the short play and the ballet: "In fact a little bit for everyone. . . ." I accompanied her upstairs without her making any objection. She told me to knock, and a servant came to light us in; Camargo dismissed her directly we were indoors, and we chatted together like old acquaintances. And then she arranged her garters. . . . Camargo the First, that celebrated dancer at the Opéra, may have had more talent, but she had not such voluptuously turned legs as had Camargo the Second. . . . I embraced her ardently. "But I am not Guéant or Junie!" "And yet . . . for having uttered those sacred names, you must leap for me!" And I put her on her back. "Take care," she exclaimed, "leaps are dangerous! The leap from the Leucadian rock drowned the love . . ." "Of Sappho!" I cried, "and I am going to drown mine too!" Here Camargo began to laugh so immoderately that I thought she was being theatrical. Between her paroxysms, she stammered: "He is going to be shipwrecked . . . shipwrecked . . . shipwrecked! . . ." ". . . I have plucked the rose!" I exclaimed at length. "And I have felt the thorn," said she with a little grimace. Afterwards she was very rude to me and told me that I was one of those little woman hunters who were the scourge of her sex; and that whenever she found such a one she punished him; I asked if she was vexed by my compliment. "Oh lud, no! I am ready to begin again." On this I overturned her; but she screamed: "The thorn! the thorn!"* so loudly that her maid, whose name was Lépine, arrived with basin, sponge and syringe, and they retired into a little closet together. Some moments after, Lépine came in and told me: "Madame has gone to bed; she cannot see you again." I tried to enter her room; but Lépine prevented me. However she said that if I would like something to eat, she would bring me a chicken. I accepted, hoping for a sequel to my adventure. The servant first brought me something to drink; she was by no means ingenuous. . . . Completely refreshed, I insisted on going to her mistress; but Camargo called out that she was indisposed. . . . Finding all entreaties useless, I told her that if I could not have the mistress I would sacrifice the maid to my rage. . . . She laughed. "Madame, he is doing it," cried Lépine. "Defend yourself tooth and claw!" "Ah, Madame, Madame!" was all Lépine's answer. A few minutes later, her mistress opened the door, and, seeing me at work, exclaimed to her: "Unlucky little wretch! What are you doing?"

*"L'épine, l'épine."

She threw herself on us, whispered a word or two to Lépine, and the two compelled me to withdraw.

On the way home my mind was filled with the strangeness of my adventure, as impromptu as had been the two before, and, drunk and swollen with success, I blessed Chance, swearing henceforward to trust in it alone. . . . One word on my moral attitude during this period. The principles taught me by my brothers, and generally endorsed at that time, had no foundation save in religion. Now we have seen that, between sixteen and seventeen years of age, this foundation utterly collapsed, and my moral nature was left without support, save for Madame Parangon, my parents, M. Collet, Mlle Fanchette and the respect one owes to oneself. Death had taken away the first and third, distance the second, a deserved inconstancy the fourth and the chaos of Paris nullified the last. Hence in my blindness I thought that I could do anything as long as I was not found out. . . . Why was I not set upon the eternal foundation of Reciprocity? I am just-minded and it would never have failed me. I will follow the consequences of this attitude of mine, after I have told what chance gave me.

Eight or ten days passed, and the prick of the thorn of Camargo's rose festered: inflammation set in; a very Phaeton fire burned in my veins, and my water, impregnated with this fire, scalded the canal which before it had only lubricated. Aches and pains, such as those which made David lament so grievously: *Lumbi mei impleti sunt illusionibus!* made it almost impossible for me to stand upright. . . . I had to take Loiseau into my confidence. . . . We went to a doctor named *Lacan.* And here it is my duty to state that for syphilis one should not go to surgeons; they are no more than clumsy charlatans; and the supposed charlatans, such as *Nicole,* *Algeroni*, etc., are the true doctors. My friend, *Gilbert de Préval*, explained to me that this is because regular practitioners are only acquainted with the old and inadequate treatment by mercury, a treatment requiring infinite care, which the ordinary practitioner neglects; whereas the unqualified men have an infallible treatment which needs little care. . . . Lacan bled me to begin with, and this useless operation upset my blood, confounded the humours of my body and sent me into a swoon which lasted for three-quarters of an hour. . . . The treatment was long, owing to my own inexperience and the negligence of my Æsculapius. . . . At last I was nearly cured, but still I went on fetching more boluses.* My "rubber", a very handsome lad, usually gave these to me, but one day he was out when I called. I felt that I had to have them; so a maidservant introduced me to Mme Lacan, a young and charming person of whom I had so far only caught a glimpse. "Are you not that Monsieur Nicolas whom Labadie talks so much about?" (Labadie was the lad.) "Yes, Madame." "But you should be cured by now. You will ruin your digestion with those boluses! . . . Let me see . . ." (and she took me into a closet). . . . "Undo that. . . . A little redness, but no more discharge." (She pressed the part gently all over.) "Do you feel anything?" "A great pleasure!" "That is not what I am asking," she answered severely. "I take an interest in your health, because M. Loiseau has spoken well of you, M. Lacan neglects you, and Labadie, I know not for what reason, seems to want your treatment to go on for ever." She had been continuing her examination while she was speaking. I could not contain myself, and . . . *eruperunt fontes vitæ* . . . Mme Lacan coolly examined the result, and said: "You are cured." She gave me a small bottle of salts of lead and a little syringe, and told me how to use them. "See no more of Camargo or her like; that kind of woman has never had real beauty, real goodness, or real health." And she sent me away. It is impossible to imagine how amazed I was at the stoicism and calm indifference of this young and beautiful woman, a calm which in no way resembled the bored passivity of Camargo, who clamoured about irrelevant matters when she should have been uttering cries of pleasure.

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*It is evidently gonorrhœa that Restif was suffering from, but at that time this was regarded as a syphilitic affection, and he was treated by inunction of mercury. [Ed.]

At first the assurance of my cure dropped balm into my blood; but afterwards, plumbing to my very depths, I conceived a supreme contempt for myself, and one day, when I was going through the Louvre, I was so strongly gripped by this idea, so penetrated with a profound consciousness of my complete futility, that I stood still and, watching the passers-by, reflected: "Not a man among them but is in a better position than I; not a man who cannot found a home! And I, I am not even sufficient to myself, I cannot even govern myself!" And I behaved in accordance with this degrading and calamitous conception. I gave up all study and literary pursuits; I vegetated like those brutes, those machines whom I had set above myself; I regarded myself as finished and without a future; I debased myself; I scorned to try to win respect for so contemptible a being as myself by guarding my honour and good habits. . . . O fatal humility! You did me more harm than the debauchery, whose mother and daughter you were! . . . Sunk in this abject state, my mind found a sort of repose: I was rid of the trouble of thinking for myself; seated on the bottommost step, I had no more falls to fear, for I could fall no farther. (This terrible condition is powerfully described in the *Paysan-Paysanne pervertis.*) . . . I took little trouble to hide my new attitude from Loiseau, Renaud and Boudard. Gaudet congratulated me upon it; Renaud and Boudard regarded it as a kind of cynical philosophy; but Loiseau realised the magnitude of my danger, and attached himself more closely to me. We became almost inseparable, and my conduct, of which he was a witness, increased his anxiety. He was the first to say to my other two friends that this supposed philosophy was a dangerous disease of the mind, which might ultimately kill it. He was right; if this worthy friend had failed me at this time, I do not know what I might not have done! At the press I was surrounded by the most depraved companions. A certain *Van Wolxem* in particular manifested the worst tendencies, and was equally inclined to theft and pimping. . . . But Loiseau sustained me, and if he could not save me from debauchery, at least he kept me from the meaner forms of vice by forcing me, through his friendship, to preserve a measure of self-esteem. However on Sundays and holidays I escaped from him and Renaud. I would start out on some excursion with them, and then, if there were no women in the party, I would leave them and slip back to Paris to revel in those crapulous pleasures which, whatever their kind, can only be given by the sex. I lived, I breathed, I was happy or unhappy, by women alone. I have said it already; I repeat it, and perhaps I shall say it yet again.

One Sunday, when I had gone to take the air in the Bois de Boulogne with my three friends, I experienced a weakness in the absence of the adored sex such as Cacus felt when he was not touching the earth. I could not contain myself, and left them furtively when they went into a place of refreshment. I returned to Paris, meaning to go to the Opera, and took the first wicket into the Louvre, which opens into the *Rue Fromenteau*. Between the junction of this street with the *Rue Beauvais* and the Rue *Jean-Saint-Denis*, I had noticed some "girls" whom I had thought pretty; but they were not there any longer. I was continuing on my way to the Opera down the last-mentioned street, when, happening to look up, I saw a charming little face at a third-floor window opposite me, on the other side of the Rue Saint-Honoré. Keeping my eyes fixed upon it, I walked straight towards it, blind and deaf to the solicitations of the harlots who line both sides of this infamous street. . . . When I reached the Rue Saint-Honoré, the young person, who was plucking at the strings of a harp, noticed me. She was no more than a child. My glance was eloquent, and, with a charming smile and gesture, she beckoned me to go upstairs. I ran down the entrance passage in my eagerness to see a public girl who cultivated agreeable accomplishments. She opened the door to me herself; and I was surprised to see a little girl with a most seductive face who appeared no more than thirteen or fourteen years old! She should have been numbered among the Graces: her smile was delicious, her expression eager yet gentle, her voice melodious and enchanting; and the breasts, which already swelled beneath their covering veil, gave life to the slender body. . . . In a word, she had everything one could ask for: cleanliness, taste, and even modesty, which is an exile for all time from these abominable places. . . . I pulled out a crown (my price for women whom I most esteemed). "Mamma is out," she said, "so keep your money to come and see me another day." She kissed me, sat upon my knees, and said pretty things to me. She had refused my present; therefore I could not suspect that her arts were born of greed. I was surprised, enchanted, ravished! I felt no desire, she only excited my tenderness. . . . I felt the same respect for this unfortunate child, who surrendered her hardly formed charms to me, as I should have had for Fanchette Collet in her sister's presence. . . . My cure was complete: but I did not feel sure enough of this to go beyond most ardent caresses, and to these the child responded in the sweetest and most voluptuous manner.

She had not sung anything to me although I wanted her to; it would have distracted my mind. I asked her age. "Guess," she smiled. "Fifteen or sixteen?" "Seventeen," she answered. "I would not have believed it," I said, "for in your profession you age so quickly that at fifteen you look more like twenty." A street walker came in at this moment and overheard my remark: "You are an excellent judge, sir!" she said tartly, thinking that I had said that the little person looked twenty. "I was joking," answered the child. "I do not want to deceive you: she is more or less right." The woman was looking out of the window. "Here is Madame!" she said. Noticing that the child looked uncomfortable, I left her. I went home untroubled by remorse, a thing which had not happened to me since I had begun to visit prostitutes. I was at peace and contented with myself for having passed nearly three hours without unchastity in a house of ill-fame! A gleam of my former virtue shone in the muddy abyss of my heart; I found honesty there and was astonished.

It was *Zéphire*! . . . Next day I went to work with enthusiasm, as though I knew what Zéphire was to be to me. I kept on saying to myself: "What a pity! . . . And so young! . . . I could have adored her! . . ." And this thought was in my mind throughout the week.

On Sunday morning my heart beat for joy at the thought that I was going to see Zéphire. . . . Loiseau suggested an excursion. "No," I answered briefly. "I have something better to do." And I told him a little about Zéphire. He smiled in pity, and remonstrated with me in a friendly way. I answered him as Borne of Auxerre answered his mother, when she came with a constable to catch him in bed with his mistress: "Zounds, don't call her a whore! She sleeps with me because she loves me; she is an honester woman than you!" (He was that same Borne who apostrophised me in my remorse on the evening of the 14th of August, 1753, behind the Cité.) I think that Loiseau spied upon me, and caught a glimpse of this new attraction which took me from my friends. At three o'clock I went to visit Zéphire. She was overjoyed to see me; the attraction had been mutual, but even stronger on her side than on mine. "I have spoken to Mamma, as was proper," she said. "My sister *Manon*, and all the other ladies here, have a *friend*; only I have no one, and it is I who earn most, although I am still a virgin. . . . I told Mamma that I wanted a friend, an honest fellow who was not a swindler nor a spy like all the others. I said that as I worked the hardest and took all the oldest men I had earned the right to have someone young and honest to make amends to me, and that I had just made the acquaintance of a lad who was gentle and not a drunkard, nor a gambler, nor a profligate, nor a swindler, nor a spy, but very attractive and that I wanted to have him to love with my whole heart. . . . Mamma told me that it was better to have a spy, because then one was certain of being warned in case of raids. Also it is one way of standing in well with the police, who give us to some of the spies as they give the cheating rights at certain billiard parlours to others. Whereas an honest man can do nothing to warn us against the police; and he cannot join our parties so that I should have to be excluded from these. She repeated that the police like us to have spies, because what they make out of us pays part of their salary, and the police protect us for this reason rather than because of our usefulness and the services we render to the public. . . . But I was so insistent that at last she gave her consent. She is coming in to see you." I did not know what to say in answer to this unexpected speech. . . . Zéphire rang the bell, and *Mamma* appeared; for she really was Zéphire's mother. I was wearing a large hat, which I did not remove. "This is my friend Dulis," said the child. (I had already used this name with the actresses and with Monnet.) "Dulis, this is my mother; say how do you do to her." I got up and, without speaking, bowed so profoundly that she could not see my face. . . . The decency of my appearance, my dress, even my silence confirmed what Zéphire had said about me. . . . But I was ashamed; I could not bring myself to look at this monstrous bawd who could prostitute the childhood of her daughter, and I can affirm that I never saw her face. (But had I looked at her, could I have recognised her, changed as she was bound to be?) "Well," said this inhuman mother, "since she wants you, she can have you. All that I ask is that you do not waste her time, or take her into taverns, or to wine gardens in the environs. For the rest, you can do just what you like, and I leave her free to follow her fancies with you. But remember that as you are not one of "those gentlemen" (the spies and swindlers who were usually the bullies of girls somewhat superior to those handed over to the Garde Française) you have no right to screw money out of her against her will. For I make that a rule. . . . I will leave you together. . . . She is a virgin, and since it is a satisfaction to her that you should pluck the flower, you shall do so. . . . What is your name? I think she said Dulis? . . . For I must give your name to our inspector, M. Maret, so that he does not allot Zéphire to one of his men." She went out after I had assured her by signs that I would treat her daughter well. The procuress thought she had understood me, but my intentions were a hundred times better than she hoped for. My manner had pleased her; she was delighted that her daughter, who was still but a child, should keep company with a young man who was honest, shy and inexperienced; one who would not give her a taste for strong liquors or force her to pass nights in crapulous orgies. She flattered herself that I would give Zéphire sensible advice, calculated to keep her quiet and steady.

When we were left alone, I felt my fondness for Zéphire grow, and in the tenderest language I asked for favours. She pressed me to her heart, and related all the distasteful things that she had to put up with every day, and told me how wonderful it was to have me to make amends to her. She gave herself to me utterly, and my pleasure in this young virgin was delicious, freely given as it was without the slightest taint of force. I forgot the whole world in Zéphire's arms; I even forgot her profession, but that was cruelly recalled to me in the evening.

At nightfall a bell rang. It was the hour at which all "friends," whoever they were, had to leave the girls. . . . Zéphire told me this, and it was like a dagger stroke in my heart. . . . As I left hastily, I saw the old man, or rather skeleton, who was to take my place. I was so disagreeably affected that I resolved never again to see the sweet child who had just given me such pleasant moments! I went away lost in thought. . . . I sought to abase myself to Zéphire's level as a prostitute, and was aware that it was no consciousness of personal dignity that made it impossible for me to do so, but a jealous instinct which demanded that my mistress should belong to me alone, although she was a public woman and although I could not lift her out of her unfortunate condition.

The following Sunday I went out resolved not to visit Zéphire, and with this firm intention I set forth walking. Yet my feet bore me to the bottom of her staircase; they took me up it, against all reasonable determination. Thus, against my will, I found myself at her door, and my hands betrayed me as had my feet; I knocked in spite of myself. . . . I entered. . . . Our interview would have been delightful if I could have believed it permanent. But every moment I seemed to hear that infamous bell. . . . However, beguiled by the enchantment of her caresses I was beginning to forget, when that detestable bell recalled my mistress to her shameful profession. I saw the same old man . . . and left broken-hearted: had it been someone new I might have been less afflicted. I passed the week in a state of continual vacillation.

On Saturday, just as the men had been paid off, an urgent memorandum arrived from the only lawyer for whom we did this kind of work; he was a friend of Claude Hérissant. All the other compositors had gone; I had stayed on alone to finish what I was doing. On this occasion I was to prove my quality as a workman.

I was what a master-printer would call "steady", that is to say, I never missed a week-day and never got drunk. I was at work by seven o'clock on Monday, the day devoted to revision of proofs, and meticulously corrected my slips in accordance with the changes marked in pen by the foreman or the author. At half-past four, when my work was finished, I went to one of the two or three public theatres. On Tuesday I came to work at six o'clock and composed eight 12mo pages *Cicero* (the type and format used in this work) at eight sous the page; and performed my other duties, which comprised the revision of proofs, unlocking the type, imposing the formes, etc. . . . On Wednesday I came at five o'clock, composed eleven pages and fulfilled certain other of my functions, such as second revises, etc., besides "distributing" thoroughly; that is to say, returning to case the type used in composing one page, so that it is available for another. . . . On Thursday I arrived at four o'clock, with my host Sellier who was a pressman, and I did twelve pages. . . . On Friday I came again at four o'clock; I composed fourteen pages, and did not leave until ten o'clock at night so as to finish distributing. . . . On Saturday I rose at three with my host, and composed sixteen to eighteen pages. On the last two days of the week I worked with such energy that my hands were completely covered with rusty stains. I was the only one of Claude's men who was privileged to work at my case on Sundays. I generally completed one sheet on that day, that is to say, twenty-four pages, and then went to my hairdresser *Lebon*, my friend Boudard's brother-in-law, who lived in the Rue Notre-Dame. When I was curled I dined with my hostess in the Rue Galande. The rest of the afternoon I devoted to pleasure. On Monday, the round began again. A holiday always lost me six francs on the week, although I worked in the morning, because of the disorganisation it caused. . . . Let us return to Saturday evening, and the lawyer's memorandum.

Claude asked me to work on Sunday, and to bring someone to help me who could read manuscript, as the writing was almost indecipherable. He knew that printers who are made to work on Sundays usually get through little. He did not yet know me, as he had had nothing urgent to do since my arrival. I was at work at six o'clock next morning: *Colin* of Liège, who has since become a tripe-seller, appeared at eight. He set up a few lines and left. Claude visited me at midday to find out how I was getting on, and was astonished to see that I had already composed four pages in folio, or one sheet of "big roman." He paid me a thousand compliments. I told him that when work was urgent, it was my practice to give my help in putting it through. He had his dinner sent up to the printing room and we ate together, so that I should not be disturbed. I dined quickly: about seven minutes sufficed for my meal. Claude was enchanted! He went downstairs. Colin did not come back. However, I had finished the memorandum by ten o'clock in the evening; and when Claude came upstairs, he was able to take away the proof. The lawyer was even more pleased than the printer, and thanked him for having put several men on the work, promising them a crown apiece. "I put on ten men," answered Claude laughing. "Very well, that will be ten crowns: here they are. But do not give them until the work has been corrected, my friend; just show them as an encouragement." Claude brought me back the proofs. It was agreed that I should spend the night in revising the three folios, which were very heavily corrected. Claude stayed to help me; he acted as my assistant, handing me the letters as I needed them. By six in the morning the three folios were corrected and ready for the press. It meant a triumph for the barrister's clients. He arrived at seven, as his memoir was being stitched. I was still alone in the printing-room, as the workmen arrived late on Mondays. "I want to see the compositors," said the barrister, "to express my satisfaction; I shall give them another six francs and my clients will not grudge it." Claude brought him in. "There they are," he said. "I only see one." "And he is the compositor who alone has completed your work between Saturday evening and now. . . ." As he said this Claude handed me the ten crowns and twelve francs in addition: nine for composing the three folios at three francs each, and three for my night. The barrister gave me the extra six francs he had just promised. Thus I got forty-eight francs for thirty-six hours' work, and many compliments besides. That was not all; Claude took a liking for me and I became his confidential workman and his friend; we grew so intimate that he confided the most private secrets of his household to me, even including those concerning his wife. . . . (*Enumeravit mihi quoties prima nocte, et quadraginta noctibus sequentibus, dilaceraverat conjugem: nesciebat quem alloquebatur! Addidit a se uxor inducias petiisse. . . .*) Never a day passed without his coming to talk to and confide in me.

A couple of charming girls lived two doors away, in a house with little balconies. For a long time I had watched the younger sister with attention, and I mentioned her in terms of praise to Claude. This was enough for him. He decided to oblige me by letting me see them closer, and invited them to inspect the printing works with their mamma. They arrived just as two pretty workgirls, Mlles *Edmée* and *Reine Giraud*, the daughters of one of the pressmen, had come into the printing-room, with Mlle *Manon Lavergne,* our neighbour and a cousin of our foreman and Bonne Sellier. Claude and his wife showed them round; he took them into all the rooms and brought them last of all to mine. I occupied a small closet screened off by a paper curtain. "Would you like to see my recluse?" he asked his fair companions, and he raised the curtain. I saluted them in a manner which distinguished me somewhat from the clods they had just been visiting. I addressed myself to the youngest and offered to print her name upon her arm without hurting her in any way. She made a good many difficulties, but consented after I had told her that I had just done the same for young Lavergne and her two friends. Her mother dictated the name, *Julie du Rumin*, and I printed it, while Madame Hérissant was discussing dresses with little Lavergne. After it I put, very lightly but so as to be visible, *whom I adore*, hoping that this imprudence would pass as a jest if it were detected; but the others saw nothing but the name. I had the satin skin of a most beautiful arm to work upon. Then I did the same for her sister *Sophie de Rumin*, but omitting the fatal clause, and afterwards for their mother. My task finished, I was at first in an ecstasy of joy at having touched the arm of a fair girl, whom I had been admiring every day but had never hoped to see so near to me. But my joy was of short duration! Claude, among other faults, was a religious hypocrite, and treated his wife, a most amiable woman, with the greatest strictness.* The ladies displayed their inscriptions to Mme Hérissant, and Claude said that it was he who had printed them; and in a sense this was no lie, as a master does all that his men do for him. Mme Hérissant asked to read them. First she looked at the mother's arm, and then she passed to the elder sister's; finally the fair youngest held out her's: *Julie du Rumin whom . . . I adore.* "Whom you adore, Monsieur?" said Mme Hérissant to her husband. Claude turned red, then pale, then violet, then blue with rage, for all the world as if there was something in the charge, and all his anger fell on me. He shot a terrible glance at me! From this moment he never spoke to me and instructed the foreman Lavergne to make things unpleasant for me; but as I was unaware that he had done so I put up with everything for a long time. At last I discovered that I was an object of detestation to him, and left him to work for *André Knapen*, at that time a young imbecile and now a fool of weight in his corporation.† Let us return to the Sunday of the memorandum.

No involuntary visit to Zéphire had been possible. On Monday I performed my ordinary work and finished my whole week. But on Sunday I could not resist my desire to see her again. Loiseau had meant to accompany me the Sunday before, or to follow me to see where I went, and had waited in vain for me with Zoé Delaporte. So this Sunday he suggested coming out with me: I agreed, and took him to see Zéphire. Her tender reproaches were little restrained by his presence. He took me aside to

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*She is portrayed in *Les Contemporaines*, Volume XXXIX, the 1st Nouvelle, under the name of Madame *Q-de-deux-points*, as is the fair Mme *de la Guette* under that of the principal heroine.

†Ah, what have I said? His son is author of the *Courrier lyrique*! Still that does not make me regret my words; but he had a charming daughter (now widow de la Guette) and from that point of view he is much to be respected!

make some friendly remarks about the unsuitability of love in such a house; and stayed with me throughout my visit. In the evening the time came for the cursed old man, and the bell rang for Zéphire. Again I saw the odious creature as we went out, and so did Loiseau.

We walked in silence: I was absorbed in my thoughts, abstracted. . . . At last, when we were near home, I burst out with these words: "No, no, I will never see her again!" "My dear friend," said Loiseau, "I expected this decision! What a part to play! Visiting such a house!" I listened, hardly conscious, and when we were indoors I threw myself upon a chair and covered my face with my hands. "O Rose," I exclaimed, "if you could see my humiliation now, how you would exult! How you would congratulate yourself, haughty Rose, on your insolent pride! I am the lover . . . of a prostitute. . . . O my Colette, for whom I have sorrowed with such anguish, how justly was I deprived of your sister! . . . Who could have foreseen that I would become what I am! I! I! . . ." I was silent, but such were my agony and shame that I was thankful that Madame Parangon was dead! . . . It is written; I will not expunge . . . the blasphemy. . . . Loiseau did his best to comfort me. He hardly succeeded at the time, but my trust in him increased. . . . I saw him every day now, for he came to André Knapen and we worked together; we were inseparable. A young man named *Héraut*, who has since become a comedian in the provinces, allied himself to us: I left Bonne Sellier and went to live alone in a little fifth-floor room in the Rue Saint-Anne-du-Palais, in the house of a fruiterer and billsticker. I was not quite so well lodged as in the Rue Saint-Julien-le-Pauvre, as my room was just an attic, papered with theatrical posters pasted on to the boards; but I had sunk lower and was less particular. Oh, Colette, if you could have seen *your friend* in this poor garret! A wretched pallet, two chairs and a broken table was all my furniture, and I kept my clothes in an old box without a lock. An opening covered with two squares of oiled paper served me for window. Loiseau became my guardian angel and led me into purer ways (but it was Zéphire who had restored my love of virtue!). I gave up seeing Gaudet, or at least sharing in his crapulous pleasures; for I would rather have died than have taken him to see Zéphire! I did not return to Zéphire, and as the time went by I assumed that she would have forgotten me, or rather I began to feel that she could never have cared for me. I became depressed and melancholy; old griefs, shut up in my heart, worked in me and undermined my health. . . . I fell seriously ill. . . . Loiseau did not desert me; he nursed me himself when he could, and while this unique and virtuous friend was labouring unsparingly to earn enough by his sweat for both of us, his faithful sweetheart, Mlle Zoé Delaporte, watched over me. He sold half his clothes: he borrowed from Mlle Zoé, who went to the limit of her resources for us. But imperious duty claimed these loving friends, and, in spite of all their zeal, I was left three-quarters of the time with none to help me. . . . Recurrent attacks of suffocation supervened, lasting for twenty-four hours. We supposed that they were caused by the mercury, which Labadie had applied externally in such unnecessary quantities, while my friend Bonnet, the apothecary, had been equally lavish with his boluses. The feeling of suffocation increased for eight hours; remained for eight hours at its height, and, during the last eight, gradually diminished. The attacks left me so weak that a breath would have knocked me down.

Loiseau was deeply distressed by these strange seizures. Either he or Mlle Zoé was obliged to stay with me while they lasted; the day came when we had no more money, and hardly any clothes. He was on the point of leaving me to go to work, and I myself was urging him to do so, when it occurred to him that he might borrow a louis or two from some old intimates and compatriots of his, who had just arrived in Paris and were lodging in the Rue Saint-Anne, near the hill of Saint-Roch. He hurried off to find them, proposing, at the same time, to ask Bonnet to come and visit me and prescribe something that would bring me relief.

At the corner of the *Rue des Bons-Enfants*, he was seen by Zéphire. She recognised him and, despite the disorder of her morning toilet, rushed downstairs, and caught him up just opposite the Palais-Royal. "Monsieur," she said timidly, "do you know if Monsieur Dulis is in Paris?" "Yes, yes, Mademoiselle, he is here." "Ah, how could he leave me so long without a visit!" "And what reason would he have for coming to see you in his present state?" "In his present state? Is he ill then?" "He has been ill a long time. . . . But I am in a hurry, and he is alone. Goodbye, Mademoiselle." "But his address?" "He is not in a condition . . . to see you. . . ." "I beseech you! His address?" "Rue Saint-Anne." "Ah, that is not far? It is near the *Rue de Richelieu*?" "No, that is not the one! . . . Goodbye, goodbye, Mademoiselle! . . ." And he fled precipitately, ashamed of having been seen in conversation with one scarcely more than a child, whose attire denoted her condition.

Zéphire did not know my Rue Sainte-Anne; but she had heard it said that there were sometimes two or three streets of the same name. She went upstairs, dressed herself decently, though elegantly, and asked Manon privately the way to the two Rues Saint-Anne. She guessed which was mine and, collecting all that she possessed in money and jewels, took advantage of her mother's absence to escape alone. She went by the *Cour* *de Lamoignon*, crossed the halls of the Palais de Justice, and, asking her way at every step, at last arrived in my little street, and enquired for me by name. No one knew "Dulis", but someone told her: "Such and such houses let furnished rooms." Zéphire asked for me at three different places, and finally came to the wretched ill-furnished house which belonged to my host, the fruiterer-billsticker-porter (for he combined the three trades). She asked for M. Dulis. "I have no Monsieur Dulis here. Who is he?" "He is my cousin . . . and ill." "Ah, I have someone who is ill, upstairs." "That is he!" "All right, go up to the fifth floor." "Is he being well looked after?" "No." "What does he need?" "Soup." "Here are six francs. Buy him a capon, four pounds of beef, and whatever else is necessary; make him a good pot-au-feu, and meanwhile, if there is anything over. . . ." "Yes, yes." She ran up quickly and, finding the key in my door, opened it a crack and recognised the only suit that I had left, lying over a broken chair. . . . Then she was certain, and came in. I did not even turn my head, for the slightest movement was painful; moreover the last eight hours of my attack had just begun and my weakness was extreme. Zéphire approached on tiptoe; she saw me dirty, bathed in sweat, and lying uncomfortably: "Ah, God!" she said in a low voice. "To see him so!" She took out a white perfumed handkerchief, and dried my face. . . . I looked at it, and not recognising it as belonging to Zoé who, moreover, had been kept at home for the last two days by the megrims, I asked feebly: "Who is it?" without moving. A voice as sweet as music answered: "It is your Zéphire. . . . What, you have been ill, and your 'wife' did not know of it! Do you not realise that she belongs utterly to you? . . . Ah, you have no idea how she loves you! Shun everyone else if you like . . . but not Zéphire! She is such a good girl, and will love you to the grave! . . ." I kissed the beautiful hands which were ministering to me; putting sweetmeats impregnated with "English drops" into my mouth, changing my nightcap, and setting me to rights. . . . How sweet are a woman's cares! . . . Zéphire could not rest until everything about me was clean: she even swept out my garret, dressed just as she was in rose taffeta trimmed with gauze. . . . "Do you know?" she said at last. "What, my sweetheart?" (For all my tenderness towards her had returned, and in double measure.) "You are going to be a father." "What do you mean, a father?" "Yes, and I am to be a mother. . . . I am pregnant. . . . Now you can judge how I love you! You, the only man, who . . ." (and she hid her face in my breast). . . . "And you deserted me! . . ." I was astounded . . . and enchanted. . . .

I only saw Zéphire's child twice after the cruel loss I was so soon to sustain. She was put out to nurse at *Ménilmontant*, and I was told that she had died. I do not hold this as a crime against Zéphire's sister or cousin, *Manon Blaizot* (afterwards Mme Gaudet); doubtless she had good motives for taking the child away from me and adopting her, but my responsibilities as a father would have saved me from certain follies.

My host entered with the soup. Zéphire fed me, and rendered me all the services necessary to an invalid. Later she said: "Dear friend, I must leave you; but I will come back in a few hours. . . . I will come back every day." She went behind an old curtain which formed a sort of alcove, and remained there a few minutes as if she were arranging my table; then she kissed me many times and left.

I was touched to the heart. . . . As I watched her go, I thought (for I was too weak to speak aloud): "I could not have expected this! The child loves me in spite of her profession! That profession has not stolen away the fond heart which Nature gave to her! . . . Oh, poor child! To what a trade you are condemned! and how wretched am I to be so poor that I am forced to leave you in it!"

My Reader and *friend*, this ruined child, this prostitute, so exalted me in my own esteem, that, once again, I can call you *friend*. You will come to adore her as I did and weep for her with me; and . . . soon . . . you will shudder, as I shuddered.

My host came in again to bring me some more soup, in accordance with Zéphire's orders, and told me that my "cousin" had given him six francs which was enough for two good *pots-au-feu*. He added that he would take nothing for the cooking, because I should only be eating the capon, so that he and his children would have the beef from the soup. . . . I was deeply touched by this mark of Zéphire's affection, and also by her sense of propriety in introducing herself as my relative. "Is your cousin a chambermaid somewhere?" continued my host. "One can see she is. . . . And she loves you! Oh, how she loves you! She arrived all in tears!" The most flowery language could not have given me such pleasure as this plain unpolished speech. The fruiterer left me when I had eaten the soup, and Loiseau came in a moment after.

"Here are some 'English drops,' dear friend, and some sugar," he said. "Bonnet is a good fellow; he gave them to me and is coming to see you directly he can get away. . . . I went in search of those friends of mine for you know what, but they left the house this morning!" "I can do without you, dear friend," I answered. "I am better. I have just taken two bowls of soup, and that has strengthened me. . . ." While I was speaking, Loiseau had gone to my little table to cut the bread for his dinner. He was just going to ask me if Zoé had been, when he noticed a fat purse. He touched it . . . it gave forth a silvery clink! . . . "But you never mentioned this?" he said, troubled. "What, my friend?" He showed me the bag in his hand. "What?" I repeated. "Money!" And he emptied the contents on to the table, twelve hundred francs in double crowns. "Ah, then you had money, my friend?" I asked. "We are talking at cross purposes," he answered. "I have just found a big purse full of six livre crowns,* and I am asking you where they came from." "Did you not bring them?" And I sat up. "No, I found them on your table!" exclaimed Loiseau. "On my table?" I pulled aside the curtain to look, and saw a whole heap of money. "Oh, what a lot!" Loiseau was counting them out in tens. "Did you not know about them?" "No, my friend. . . . Oh God! Could it be . . ." "Has anyone been here?" "Yes; that young girl whom we visited one day together." "Zéphire! . . . It is true! She saw me. . . . She spoke to me. . . . Oh God! A prostitute. . . ." "Say no more, my friend! Fear to blaspheme! We should respect her. . . ." "Respect her! Ah, it matters not to me where virtue dwells, there I prostrate myself and adore it. . . ." He fell on his knees, and lifting his pure hands and tear-filled eyes to heaven, he exclaimed: "Great God, you are the Father of all your creatures, and in the heart of each is the goodness you have put there! But I marvel at this masterpiece of your hands, which has flourished in the very heart of impurity and corruption!" Tears poured down his cheeks and dropped on to his breast. He recounted the money: "Twelve hundred francs! The price of your health. . . ." He shut up the purse. "But remember what this money has cost her who gave it you. . . ." "Yes, yes, I feel that, and the value I should put upon it. . . ." Loiseau went back to work overjoyed, for he had come to love me more than himself since I had been dependent on him, and his attachment was measured by all that I had cost him. I entreated him to go and enquire after Zoé,

*About 15,000 francs in present value. [Ed.]

and to bring her to dine with us at whatever time the capon would be ready.

Zéphire appeared again before my friend had returned. She was no longer dressed for the street but was wearing a little house-dress of Indian muslin. Her sister Manon came with her. I was sitting up in bed. Zéphire came to my arms: "I love Mamma and my sister with all my heart!" she said. "They approve of what I am doing, and say that it is my duty to look after you; and my mother has allowed me to stay and nurse you." I kissed the hands of Zéphire and Manon. "She is your 'wife'," said the latter. "If she was in trouble and was sent to the Hospital, would it not be your duty to comfort her? Her chance has come first, and may she never be in a case to need your help in return! But life is so full of trouble that truly we must help one another. Zéphire belongs to you: she owes you all she can give; you have only to speak, and she will sacrifice everything for you. I judge her by myself. If I had a good fellow for my friend, who had won my love by treating me rightly, I would do as much. . . . Mamma saw how you behaved with my sister and was satisfied. In fact she is delighted that she should have you instead of someone who would give her bad advice; for Zéphire is a good girl and it is easy to win her affection. We know that from the way she loves us; it is unparalleled in a girl of her age, in our profession which kills all natural instincts." "Now that I may stay and nurse you, dear friend," said Zéphire to me, "you will see what a joy it is to me!" My twenty-four hours of oppression had just come to an end, and I was infinitely better. . . . I smiled at my little friend's words. "He is better," she said to her sister. "You need not stay with me, as Mamma told you to. . . ."

Loiseau came in, and was surprised to find two pretty girls by my bedside. . . . Then he recognised Zéphire, but gave no sign of this as she was not alone. . . . Zéphire gave him the welcome he deserved; every word and action indicated her sincere and grateful nature. She repeated what she had just said, that she needed no help; and when Loiseau had assured Manon that the attack was over, the latter consented to return home after she had taken supper with us. My host, following the instructions of the two sisters, appeared with a folding bedstead for my young cousin and all else that was necessary for sleeping, and told us at the same time that our supper was coming up. Loiseau prepared and set out the table. Wine was brought, and dinner followed. "And Zoé!" I cried. "Who is Zoé?" asked Zéphire. "My friend's friend," I answered. "Ah, then I shall love her!" she exclaimed. Loiseau told us that Mlle Delaporte had been very unwell, but that she was better that evening. "She was greatly distressed that this should have happened during your attack," he added, "but she will come tomorrow. . . ." Loiseau and Manon sat on the folding bedstead, and Zéphire and I upon mine. At sight of the dishes I felt a suggestion of hunger, and said so to Zéphire, who wept for joy. I ate little, however; but each mouthful that I took was given to me by Zéphire from the plate we shared, as Loiseau and Manon shared the other one. Joy came back into my heart; it shone in my sweet friend's eyes, and Loiseau shared it with us. "To be happy again," I said to him, "after so many dreary days!" "Yes, and we will never forget to whom we owe it." "There!" exclaimed Manon, "each of these two is as good as the other!" "But he is the better," I said, pointing to Loiseau. "If you knew all that he has done for me!" And I told them. Zéphire seized his hand and kissed it. This touching tribute was too much for the sensibility of that good and upright man, and he burst into tears. "Reflect, Mademoiselle," he said to Zéphire, "that you hold the heart of one who was destined to be the luckiest of men, but who had the misfortune to lose his happiness through the death of an angelic creature! In the future, fair Zéphire, remember to respect the friend of the virtuous Madame Parangon in the conduct of your life, at the same time as you make him happy in your tenderness." I had cried out, but Loiseau said: "Forgive me; her name can never be out of place." I threw myself into his arms, and then into Zéphire's. "Here is my one consolation! Oh, my dear child, how you comfort me for all my misfortunes!" My little friend clasped me to her, and even Manon was enchanted. Loiseau could not recover from his astonishment that two prostitutes could thus share our spiritual joys.

When supper was finished Zéphire said to Loiseau: "I hope you will be so kind as to escort my sister home. It would be dangerous for her to go alone so late as this; some profligates might attack her maliciously, and it wants no more than that for the Guard to take her." At these words Loiseau looked abashed, for the modest conversation and behaviour of the two sisters had beguiled him into a momentary forgetfulness. However, he pulled himself together, and said: "If in her simplicity she did not at times say things like that, one would never remember. . . ."

Loiseau and Manon departed, and, as the former had to pass my door on his way home, he promised to come in and say good night. . . .

On the way home Manon offered her heart and all her love to her escort, and this upright man of pure life had been so enchanted by my young friend that the proposal did not horrify him as it would have done in other circumstances. To be the . . . of a lost woman, he! the modest, the good, the pious, the virtuous Loiseau! . . . Yet I belonged to Zéphire, I who had an equal horror of a vile dependency . . . and I made no base use of my position; or rather, I would not normally have done so. These thoughts passed through Loiseau's mind, and out of affection for me and respect for

Zéphire, he might perhaps have accepted Manon's suggestion, had it not been for the ardent and virtuous attachment which he had begun to feel for Mlle Delaporte since Maîne Lebègue's marriage. On his return, Loiseau told me something of what had passed; nor did he seek to disguise anything from my friend, save when he used two or three Latin words: *Machæroforos ego!* . . . The landlord came upstairs to warn us that he was just going to shut up, and I was careful to appear as ill as I had been all day, so that the good man should have no scruples. Loiseau left: he must have been tired out, for he had been up all the night before.

At last we were alone. I could not persuade Zéphire to go to her own bed; she came into mine, and, taking me in her arms, lulled me to sleep upon her breast with little tender words. A long and peaceful sleep, secured by three pieces of sugar soaked in Bonnet's "English drops" and following after nourishing food, gave me back my strength. I woke next morning in my generous friend's arms, strong and well. She left me at once and got into her own bed, and we talked.

My second remark expressed my intense gratitude, and Zéphire's reply showed more of understanding than could have been expected in a girl of her age, and still more in her profession. "My friend, does your right hand thank your left for what it does? I am pregnant by you; we are but one person in two bodies, because together we have made one and the same child. . . ." Then she told me how, in spite of her profession, not only had I deflowered her, but that I had been the only one to possess her. Quite unaware of the horror of her trade, she described all the shifts she had used to escape this, and added that it was her extreme youth which had made it easy for her to keep to her purpose of remaining faithful to me. She confessed that she was only twelve years old, although she was fully developed (doubtless because the *fellationes* and *linctiones* of the old men had advanced pubicity), and that this was why her mother gave her all the old and rich clients. She added that the man whom I had seen, and whose money practically sufficed for her keep, was incapable of doing anything and was satisfied with detailing in disgusting terms his impotent caprices. Others she had frightened off by expressing doubts as to her health, so that they refrained from certain infamous oral satisfactions. As her breath was still sweet through these precautions she disguised its purity by always sucking an orange or a lemon or nibbling at an apple before opening the door, thus using the same means to hide her freshness from curious profligates as others took to hide their putrefaction. . . .

When Zéphire was nearly dressed, our conversation was interrupted by the landlord. He opened the door as the key was in the lock and brought me in some soup. Zéphire served me, and told him to make her some coffee with milk. Then we began to talk again, and my sweetheart asked me whether, as Loiseau was pledged elsewhere, I had not another honest lad among my friends who would do for Manon. "Yes, I have a friend who would have been my brother-in-law, if he and I had had our way. He shall be my brother-in-law through your sister Manon." The girl was quite overjoyed! "Your friends, they will be my family! Oh, how happy we shall be all together!" She kissed me, and took away my bowl, and ran to see how her coffee was getting on.

Left alone for a moment, thoughts crowded to my mind. It seemed to me that I had recovered something of that noble mental attitude which Madame Parangon had infused into me; something of my purity when I had loved Jeannette Rousseau. I felt that I owed this to Zéphire and that it was a more precious gift than the preservation of my life which had preceded it. . . . My little friend returned, gay and content. She ruffled my hair which, at this time, was chestnut coloured, wavy and very beautiful; and she curled it herself. . . . Her breakfast came and we took it together. Loiseau appeared and there was a cup ready for him, but, seeing me so much better, he only stayed for a moment and then hurried off to work. Although we were in December the weather was fine and mild, so we went down to the *Quai des Orfèvres* to enjoy the sun, which was shining from a cloudless sky: Nature bestowed this gift on all expressly that we might benefit by it. Zéphire unrouged looked like a young virgin, and her sweet and tender eyes expressed only the goodness of her heart. I had already noticed more than once that she considered her profession as legitimate, so I said to her: "My friend, I would rather that the people here did not know all about us; they might not realise that you are virtue itself." "What does it matter, my friend? We are just as necessary as any other profession; that was what Mamma told me, and that was what decided me to enter it as she wished. She says that we are a protection to other women, and that without us there would be all sorts of licence. Also Mamma considers that she is a woman who should be treated with respect, and said as much one day to our inspector* when he was rude to her. We are devotees and martyrs. . . . And that pleases me, because I should not like to belong to some of the vile professions I see about me." From this it followed that if one of the women from the shops on the quay had asked: "And what do you do, Mademoiselle?" Zéphire would have answered quite simply: "Madame, I am a courtesan. . . ." I did not think the moment had yet come to enlighten

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*Maret was head of the department concerned with prostitutes, as Dhemmery was of that which controlled the Bookshops, etc. Now it is a man called Dutronchet. Apparently Maret made the bawd angry with him on purpose, to provide an excuse for authorising her to put her daughter into the profession.

Zéphire, both because I considered her too young to understand me, and because I feared to add uselessly to her unhappiness. I had thought that her behaviour when she left me for her old men was the result of habit, but no: in Zéphire this was devotion to her profession and what she called her duty. The innocent child thought: "Everyone has a profession; this is mine; I must fulfil it. . . ." Beneath an appearance of vice, my Zéphire had nothing in her heart but resignation, obedience to her mother, and devotion to duty. , . . "Just heavens," I said to myself after these reflections, "is it possible that there can be virtue in the voluntary practice of prostitution?" Yes, there can, for Zéphire the prostitute was virtuous, whereas so many honest women are not! But to say that Zéphire was, of her own will, a prostitute is to slander her. She had often been assaulted between the age of ten and the time when I first saw her, but never deflowered. I plucked her rose; she gave it me for the sake of love, not of my love for her (my feeling was more tender) but of hers for me. She gave herself utterly to me because she loved me, and it was this, perhaps, that made me in turn fall in love with her. Since we had become acquainted, Zéphire had permitted no one to attempt the enterprise which I had made easy; and she had equally refused any of those caresses which pertain to the heart. Complaints had been made about this to her mother; but the number of her clients was undiminished, and the woman only scolded her for the sake of appearances. And Zéphire's attachment to myself was ardent, generous, faithful and complete; she would have sacrificed her repose, her health, and everything she possessed, even to life itself, for me. . . . And she was to give me all these.*

*Zéphire was the prototype in real life of that figure of purity in a vicious environment of which some years later the Romanticists made imaginary but inferior copies. Cubières, who knew Restif well, was convinced of the truth of the narrative, and Funck-Brentano states that Pierre Louys was able to identify Zéphire in official archives. [Ed.]

Our walk on the Quai des Orfèvres gave me a complete insight into Zéphire's mind; and it was from this moment that I began to love her with a devouring passion, equal to that which I had felt for Jeannette Rousseau, and, still more intensely, for Madame Parangon. Zéphire was the third entity of this whole, my single passion. I felt the strength of my attachment as we went upstairs together. Her pretty figure, which had not yet grown heavy and never lost its grace, her beautiful fair plaits, the tones of her voice, her eager, lissom movements, all these ravished my senses! But the thought: *She will leave me soon for* . . . drew a deep sigh from me as we reached the second floor. She turned round: "You sighed?" "Ah, Zéphire, I adore you! You have no idea of the value I set upon you since this last hour together!" "Since this last hour? . . . But come in here, dear friend . . ." and she opened a door into a room to which the fruiterer-billsticker was just putting the finishing touches. "This is my best room," he said. Thus, instead of my garret, I had my landlord's best room. Yet I regretted my attic papered with theatrical posters, and had not my new abode been given me by Zéphire, I would have refused it. . . . "Why, since our last hour together?" she repeated. "Because only for an hour have I understood you completely and realised your worth." "But you love me?" "I adore you." "Is that more?" "Yes, worship is the perfecting of love." "Ah, then how happy I am to be adored by you!" "If you want me to be happy too, my Zéphire, we must never part." "That is all I ask. I am your wife." "You must not practise your profession." "I am only too willing; I am scarcely in love with it . . . but are you rich?" "O my sweet friend, the fatal words *I am poor* never rent my heart until I knew you! . . . But you must leave your profession; it is absolutely necessary."

It was midday. Zéphire heard someone coming up the stairs, and ran to the door. It was Loiseau. "Do not go up any higher," she said. "He lives here now." "I am coming to dine with you, my friends," he said. "We were waiting for you," answered Zéphire. Then I took Loiseau's hand and said, pointing to Zéphire: "You see this child? Eléonore, Adelaïde and Stanislette" (Mlle Zoé's pupils, the three daughters of the violinist) "are not more innocent, are not more pure! . . ." And, in her presence, I explained the opinions of this admirable child to him. . . . Loiseau's fine nature warmed to my recital; the veins of his face dilated, and, when I had finished, he exclaimed: "You must be a privileged being! Only for you does Heaven perform these miracles, which so rarely come to gratify other men. O friend of Madame Parangon (and I know how deeply you were so), how has it come about that you have found another phenomenon, after having lost that prodigy of beauty, generosity, and virtue? . . . I am no longer astonished at the attachment my soul has conceived for yours. I could not understand the violent attraction which draws me to you; but you are a favoured being; that is the explanation. . . ." He questioned Zéphire himself, but with that discretion and that propriety which was natural to him, and her ingenuous answers convinced him. Loiseau was a deist and truly pious. He knelt down, and gave thanks to the Supreme Being: "Praise be to thee, Father of all that is!" he exclaimed. "I adore thee for thy infinite goodness, in not permitting a pure soul made in thy sacred image to be contaminated by the vilest of professions!. . . . Thou hast left some virtue to her, even in the midst of prostitution! . . . Thus in old times the priestesses of Venus, who did homage to thee in the person of the goddess of beauty, were not less virtuous for doing things that nowadays would be thought the shame of shame. . . ." He rose, and came to us. "Dear friend, fair Zéphire, then you are neither of you vicious, and I can honour and esteem you, knowing that there is nothing in you to repel esteem? . . . I had not expected this, and God must love me too, since he will not suffer me to be contrary to myself, and love where I do not respect."

Loiseau and I vied with one another in enlightening Zéphire on the infamy of her calling; and upon the vice inseparable from the profession which she considered lawful. . . . She shuddered, and asked me: "Then what must I do, my friend?" "Become apprenticed to some woman's trade," I answered. "Nature and love intend that you should be mine some day. . . . Before heaven and in the presence of my dear Loiseau, whose friendship is sacred to me, I swear to make you my wife. But first we must spend a few years apart, until your pretty face is forgotten, so that your husband may never be humiliated by the insolent smile of some other man." Zéphire agreed to everything with a promptitude and trust in me that indicated her devotion. Unfortunately we had no money except her own; my illness had absolutely exhausted our resources and we were in debt to Renaud, to Boudard and to Mlle Zoé. But Zéphire had cured me, and I resolved to begin working again on the next day. We set aside three-quarters of the sum which Zéphire had brought, and Loiseau hurried off to explain matters to Mlle Delaporte and bring her back to dinner. Zéphire did nothing to belie Loiseau's praise of her. We dined first, and then Mlle Zoé, fully informed as to the position, took Loiseau's arm and went to see a friend of hers; a milliner at the corner of the *Rue de Savoie* and the *Rue des Grands-Augustins*, whose shop is now occupied by a barber. She spoke about Zéphire, explaining certain things and among them the girl's pregnancy. The dressmaker refused to have her, but on Mlle Delaporte's entreaty, consented to see her; so they came back to fetch us.

Zéphire had put on a cotton frock which she had sent home for, and dressed as a little workgirl she was prettier than ever. In spite of everything that the dressmaker knew, her appearance removed every doubt; and *Mme Guisland* and her girls were filled with admiration for her. "Why, you have brought me a charming fairy," exclaimed Mme Guisland. She was told in confidence that I was Zéphire's intended. "In that case," she answered, "everything is settled; for this young man can never cease to love so charming a person." We concluded the bargain for six hundred francs for three years, and insisted on paying them in advance. . . .

Now came the moment for talking to the mother, and recovering Zéphire's trunk and possessions. First Loiseau spoke to Manon. He told her quite frankly that her sister wanted to lead an honest life, as she was going to marry me some day; and he explained the reasons which made it necessary for her to have been in some other trade for a few years before she became my wife. Manon began to cry, and said that Zéphire was very lucky! With tears running down her cheeks, she went to look for her aunt (whom she called her Mamma) and brought her to Loiseau. This woman took him for me. He explained his request and his reasons for making it, prepared to meet with the most violent opposition; for he thought that a woman of this kind would be ready to eat him alive at the mere suggestion of restoring her daughter's honour. But Zéphire's mother was touched; all she asked was for some guarantee that the marriage would take place. She gave him the trunk and clothes at once, and even the money that was due to the girl. It was her wish that Manon should take the things to Zéphire with a thousand fond messages from her mother. . . . Loiseau was in an ecstasy of admiration! "I am very pleased," added the mother, "that my fragile Zéphire should escape this miserable profession. I only put her into it through a . . . weakness for that . . . Maret, who got a commission of six francs on every old man. . . . My one wish was that she should be an honest woman some day, and especially before she was worn out. . . ." When Manon told her that Zéphire was pregnant by her lover, she jumped for joy. "Oh, poor child! She has done well to leave us! She is very dear to me, for I have no other children; Manon is only my niece. . . . I much prefer to trade in strangers than to sell my own flesh and blood, and above all my Zéphire. . . . Oh, what a comfort it would be to see my daughter a respectable woman with children! . . ."

Loiseau left with Manon, who had dressed herself as an ordinary townswoman; they got into a cab, the trunk was fastened on behind and two large parcels of linen and clothes on the top. Before going to the milliner's, they called for me at the printing works. Loiseau came up to fetch me, and told me as we were going downstairs of his success with Zéphire's mother. I was overjoyed by his news, and was particularly delighted that she had taken Loiseau for me; this thought somehow soothed the feeling of horror which that kind of woman has always inspired in me. I greeted Manon by the name of "sister"; and she repeated everything that her mother had said concerning Zéphire's change of calling and her prospective marriage. We picked up Mlle Zoé and then went on to the Rue de Savoie.

We found an absorbed and industrious Zéphire at work; but she gave a cry of joy on seeing us. We told her about the excellent attitude adopted by her mother while we were showing her everything that had been sent, including the money. Manon behaved with propriety; she spoke of her mother's esteem for Mlle Delaporte, M. Loiseau and myself, in proof of which she gave Zéphire certain valuable jewels which only her mother had the right to dispose of. They were contained in a pretty box which was given into Mme Guisland's charge. Then Loiseau and Manon got into the cab again to go and fetch Zéphire's bed. We chatted while waiting for their return, Zéphire, Zoé, Mme Guisland and myself. Zoé was a very intelligent person, and the milliner knew her for the grand-daughter of that famous Martin who brought the secret of lacquer work from China, and also as the cousin of one of her clients, Mme Grange, a very pretty woman and the wife of a master-printer. Then Zoé herself told us how, young, beautiful and petted, she had for a long time been a society butterfly, passing her time in a round of pleasures which her acquaintance with a rich family containing plenty of pretty women procured for her. She went out continually, and she was courted; but, as she was not well off, she did not find a husband. It was at this time that Loiseau made her acquaintance at the house of a common friend, Mme Lacan (for love of whom young Labadie had just died; for she was virtuous, despite the examination which I described). Zoé could not meet so amiable a man without preferring him to everyone else and becoming permanently attached to him. But Loiseau was frightened by her elegance and frivolity, and would not respond to her advances. When she complained of this, he told her the reason. Without hesitation Zoé adopted a simple style of dressing, stopped going to parties, and set up as a teacher of young girls. Then she said to Loiseau: "If I am now what you wanted me to be, the credit belongs to you; for I am the work of your hands." "I am more than willing to worship," answered Loiseau laughing. Such was the tale told us by Mlle Zoé Delaporte (doubtless for Zéphire's benefit) of the way in which she had come to know my friend. Mme Guisland, reading my love for her new pupil in my eyes, asked whether the apprenticeship would hold for three years.

"Yes," I answered, "because I cannot make her my wife before then." "Good! I feel that I shall become attached to this young person, and could not easily part with her before the time agreed upon. I do not ask her to be as perfect as she has been since yesterday; that would be impossible. But if she is only half as good, she will become as dear to me as my own daughters."

Manon and Loiseau came back. Zéphire's possessions were arranged, and her bed set up in the room of Mme Guisland's eldest daughter, Mlle Suadèle, who had already taken a liking for her. Against Zéphire's wishes, I insisted that all the money should be put away with the jewels in a little secret drawer in her trunk. At last we left her. She wept on saying goodbye to her sister, but she explained to me: "It is because I am so sorry that she has to go back there, not because I want to go with her. . . . On the contrary I am overwhelmed with joy at being here. . . . Ah, why cannot my poor sister stay with me? . . . Dear friend, remember what you told me about your friend Gaudet: she is sure to love him, and when she loves, she will leave that place." "Yes," I answered, "for in a good heart, love is virtue." And this remark made her tremble and blush for joy.

From this fortunate day, I took courage again and worked as before. I was happy and contented; my future was settled; Zéphire was to be my wife. I meant to use every effort to earn enough to pay back what we had been obliged to take of the twelve hundred francs which she had brought me on her first visit, intending to use the sum to pay my admission fee as a retail mercer, so that Zéphire could open a millinery shop directly her apprenticeship was finished. Certain expectations of help from my parents combined with my future mother-in-law's promises made me easy as to the money necessary to establish us. This was the last gleam of happiness which was to embellish my youth.

I did not speak directly to Zéphire every day, for fear lest too frequent visits might displease her mistress; but never an evening went by without my passing her windows to catch a glimpse of her through the panes. I took care to tell her my purpose beforehand, and we agreed upon a signal which only she would understand. So before returning home after work, or going to Loiseau's room, I would hurry to Zéphire's street and give the signal. Zéphire answered in the manner agreed, and then I would say a few words aloud as though I were speaking to some woman in the street. Zéphire took them to herself, and so I had spoken to her. If circumstances permitted, Zéphire would open a pane and say something to her companions or to the servant, which I took to myself in the same way; and Zéphire had answered me. If she could not open the window, Zéphire would draw aside a little corner of the curtain and, after I had spoken, touch her forehead or her mouth with her hand; this signified a kiss: we had embraced each other. Or sometimes I would stand with my mouth close to her window, and sing some words in a low voice the significance of which would have been lost had she not known it in advance. Often I would slip a little note, folded fanwise, through the hole for the window pin which was just behind her; a light tap on the pane, and she would put out a hand and secure the note unperceived. But whatever happened, I always went away in a perfect ecstasy of joy. Sometimes I would sing a new song such as:

Love painted me the picture . . .

or some little cantilena of my own composition, such as the one which I introduced later into my play *Le Loup dans la Bergerie* and finally used in *L'Épouse Comédienne*, when I had given up all hope of seeing the former play produced.

> *I prefer my Blonde (when I walk abroad at evening) I prefer my Blonde and your eyes are black!*
>
> *And your eyes are black! But when I see you, dark Raimonde (it is for you I walk abroad at evening), all my love melts in your fine black eyes.*
>
> *In your fine black eyes, but it is at evening especially that my fires leap high (and I say as I walk abroad) there is nothing in the world so fine as her black eyes.*
>
> *But more precious than her black eyes is the sweet chatter (I hear it on my walk abroad) with which she shames the enemy of duty.*

I composed many such cantilenas for my evening serenades. Here is another for which I was accompanied by Richecœur (of Bonne Sellier's) on the guitar, while Bonnet scraped the cello, Boudard played the violin, and Loiseau sang second:

> *In this enchanting refuge of Love and Pleasure, ah, how calm could one be were it not for the trouble of desire! It flies like a breeze and doubles on its track; it leaves a trail of torment from zenith to nadir! Many an innocent cheek blushes and pales in an attempt to grasp it.*
>
> *Must we deny a feeling created by simple Nature to bring us happiness? Or must we deceive the spotless soul of artless Beauty?*
>
> *In this enchanting refuge, etc.*
>
> *Must we vaunt a sad sentiment Nature approves and Reason defends? Do we not wrong it when our heart denies it?*
>
> *Love plays upon this charming assembly like a zephyr, presaging a storm: at first a sigh, but soon a raging hurricane! Battered by the tempest, we lose courage. . . . Such is the work of ill-controlled desire.*
>
> *I defy Desire and Love and Pleasure, nor shall one sigh be heard to abate my courage! I will raise a temple of virtue upon their draggled trophy, to be my witness.*
>
> *In this enchanting refuge, etc.*

Only once did we give this little concert for fear of attracting the neighbours' attention; but I never missed my evening visit to Zéphire; sometimes singing her the songs or little verses quoted in my *Drame de la Vie*,* and sometimes the various ballads that I have since introduced into my plays; for nearly all these cantilenas were written for her.

Thus, while I was bound up in the most charming creature that ever lived, every one of my days was equally happy; a thing unique in my experience and, I think, in that of any who have loved! I lived in innocence and purity with a young girl who had been a prostitute. I filled my life with my work, with Zéphire, and with my friend; for I had taken a horror of the abominable debauchery which had nearly been the ruin of my little sweetheart. Gaudet had been away during my illness (he went to Rouen with Bourdignon), and when he came in search of me on his return, he lamented, saying: "My poor friend is bent on making a Carthusian or a castrate of himself." Nevertheless, through my example, he reformed. I was in flourishing health, happiness looked upon me, Nature smiled again and was fair. Yes, this period (save for some moments given me by Madame Parangon) was the happiest in my life. . . . One word about Loiseau.

Manon, who often came to see us, had not given up hope of winning him; she repeated over and over again that the two sisters ought to have the two friends. She was ready to leave her profession immediately and join Zéphire. She was much better off than my young friend as she was now twenty-two; she was fresh-looking, and her beauty was of exactly the same type as that of Nannette the Reaper. Only one thing could have tempted Loiseau, that of being my brother in name as he was in spirit; but he had already given all his love and respect to Mlle Zoé. . . . They were poor. . . . We all were . . . but what condition is not beautified by

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*See *Drame de la Vie*, pp. 301-303, etc.

love? I could only satisfy Manon by delivering a pompous eulogy on Gaudet, and promising to dispose him favourably towards her. . . . All this time Loiseau and I were working for the same printer on the same book, *à mèche d'affut*, a phrase which means that the work is done and paid for in common. We saved every penny we could. Loiseau was naturally economical, and constituted himself my hairdresser. He took over all the parts of our work at which he was better than I, and I did the things in which my skill excelled his. Never was partnership so successful; it should have gone on for ever! . . . We enjoyed our pleasures intensely and deliciously. Loiseau good-naturedly used to call me *master*; and on Saturdays, after we had been paid off, he would say: "No more *Master* Nicolas now till Monday, nor journeyman Loiseau either." He would wash his hands, tidy himself up to go out, and, taking his hat under his arm, assume the airs of a man of quality: "Shall we take a stroll, Marquis?" he would say laughingly. "Yes, Comte. . . . Poor nobles!" "Poor nobles? Yes indeed. For what marquis or even duke could have more content and happiness than we shall enjoy to-morrow? Rather they will have less, for they are marquises every day and we only for one day out of the seven, so to make all even our happiness should be six times greater than theirs. . . . They have no Zéphire or Zoé. Go now, Monsieur le Marquis, and see Mlle Zéphire, and afterwards come to Mlle Zoé's apartment to give us news of her." We parted with well-lined pockets. I always called on Mme Guisland on Saturday evenings to arrange where Zéphire and I should meet next day. When Zéphire took her turn at minding the shop, Loiseau, Zoé and I would spend the afternoon there and, after a certain excursion which I shall be describing shortly, Renaud, Boudard, Gaudet, Mme Deschamps, Mlle Mentelle, Manon and myself used to keep her company.

As soon as one of her fellow-workers returned, we would take her out to have some fresh air.

But if Zéphire was not on duty, we would go into the country and take a delightful walk in some of the more deserted places on the outskirts of Paris. . . . But let us return to the first Sunday of her apprenticeship.

Zéphire's mother had made Loiseau (mistaking him for me) promise to go and see her, and, as it was the New Year, this was a duty I was bound to fulfil. She gave me a tender welcome (Manon had apprised her of her mistake) and I found her not so despicable as I had expected–at least in so far as the natural affections were concerned. She loved her daughter and assured me that she would give her a dowry when we married, to help towards our establishment. She begged me to come and see her every week to give her news of Zéphire and let her know of anything the child might need. (I did not go myself, but I punctually despatched Loiseau.) She did not want to call at Mme Guisland's, nor to have Zéphire at the house. This she volunteered. "Zéphire has left the profession," she said, "and an honest girl must not put foot within these doors." I cannot express the pleasure I felt at her decision. Loiseau and I thanked her for it, and Loiseau confirmed her view of the matter by pointing out that her daughter could not open a shop of her own until her appearance was utterly forgotten. She felt the force of this argument, and called me her friend, her dear son and the saviour of her unfortunate daughter. "You have taken a heavy load off my poor conscience, M. Dulis, for I never took a man to Zéphire's room without a shudder! God be thanked that you had her virginity and are the father of the child she bears. . . . Thus, in her relation to you at least, she is all that the most honest girl in Paris could be to her future husband. That is my consolation: her husband has had what he ought to have; and since that time she has never allowed anyone else to do what he did. She often used to tell me so, and so did Manon here, who is the daughter of my elder sister, a labourer's wife in my native place; for Zéphire is my only daughter." Loiseau asked the name of her native place. "I will answer that question on the wedding-day; not before. . . . And where do you come from?" (For reasons connected with my brothers' acquaintances in Paris, I had not yet told my name to Zéphire, because it was so distinctive. She only knew me as Dulis. Even Zoé did not know my name; for all my friends called me *Monsieur Nicolas*, or simply Nicolas, or Master Nicolas, and thought this was my surname. In the same way, the bookseller Edme Rapenot was only known to the trade as Edme. Thus he signed his notes and his deeds; and this was the only name on his catalogues. Anxious to help me, Loiseau quickly took the question to himself and said he came from Clamecy, and the woman did not repeat her question. Yet her face stirred a faint memory in me which I could not disentangle. Corpulence had spoilt her figure and her looks; and perhaps in any case her trade had so changed her expression that I should never have been able to rediscover the girl in the woman.

I introduce these oft repeated details here so that I need not return to them again.

At times I was astonished to find myself happy once more, after the loss of my friend and my protectress, my youth's divinity! (For Mlle Fanchette I grieved little, for she had given me up voluntarily.) I said as much to Loiseau. "It is because Zéphire has her virtues and her beauty," he answered, "and because it was Colette's virtue rather than her beauty that you loved. . . . We two are proof of what the moralists maintain, that the necessary is sufficient to happiness. But love must be included in what is meant by necessary. If Christians had preserved a pure morality with the impartiality of their Legislator, instead of seeking to refine it beyond all bounds, they would have made the world a really happy place. Jesus himself loved; young Magdalen of Bethany was so much attracted by him that she followed him, and became his favourite; and the fair girl's elder sister, Martha, was jealous. . . . Christianity was on the point of bringing the Golden Age back to earth, but that puritan Paul spoilt everything: he introduced into the new religion a tormenting austerity, not unlike that which we find among peasants, who are always surly and depressed. Then Christians started off in mad pursuit of a false ideal, a monkish happiness, opposed to human nature and the example of Jesus, and they have done nothing but grieve man's mind and body, given nothing but unhappiness. . . . For the monkish ideal of self-isolation and life apart from women can give but a factitious, melancholy and undurable happiness, because it is the offspring of a depraved imagination; hence the bewildering contradiction that now exists between Nature and religious precept. That is why I became simply a deist, though no one perhaps respects Jesus as much as I." Such were Loiseau's opinions.

Since my return to health and happiness, we saw much more of Renaud, Boudard and Gaudet. The two former each had their mistress. We already know Boudard's, Renaud's was a married woman.* It only remained to attach Gaudet to her whom I had in mind for him. The second time I went to visit Zéphire's mother on Sunday morning, she was not in. I was delighted. . . . I took Manon aside, and said to her: "Dear sister, you wanted my friend Loiseau, but his heart has found an object worthy of it. However, I have another friend (and he may suit you even better) who will

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*See the 130th *Contemporaine.*

make you an honest lover, and, if you are worthy of it, a good husband; but for that you must carry out what you would have done to win Loiseau." "I have so much confidence in you," she answered, "that, if he is your friend, I will promise anything. Mamma, or rather my aunt, asks nothing better than to see us both honest, Zéphire and me, and she will be just as grateful on my behalf as she was on her daughter's; so you can make what arrangements you like." "Then I will send my friend to see you; unless you would rather come to your sister's mistress in a little while and meet him there?" "Listen, Dulis, did you meet Zéphire in a third person's house? Was it not here that you found her . . . surrounded by . . .? Let us be honest. If your friend cannot stand seeing me here, still less will he be able to endure the discovery that I have been here." "Very well then. Say what you should to him and explain your intentions. If he likes you as much as I hope he will, and you like him equally well, then my recommendation and his quality as my friend will be enough to found a lasting attachment." I fulfilled my promise and Gaudet went to see Manon, with a note of introduction from me. They liked each other, and the business was settled as we shall see. Let us return to my other two friends.

Renaud adored Mme Deschamps, and she returned his love; but this beautiful and good woman was devoted to her duty. Her husband trusted her and she would not have deceived him for anything in the world. Boudard was temperamentally cold, and Mlle Mentelle loved him more fondly than he loved her. . . . Neither of these two dear friends, nor yet Gaudet either, saw Zéphire before her lying in, which took place in April. She was nursed by her mother in the latter's private apartment on the third floor of a grocer's house in the *Rue du Petit Reposoir*, and her mother also selected a good nurse for the child (a daughter) in Ménilmontant. My friends and their ladies were longing to meet my sweet Zéphire after the portrait that Mlle Delaporte had given them of her, but she was obliged to live in retirement. . . . Not until six weeks after the young mother was safely through her trouble, that is to say, about the 19th of June, did we decide to give them this satisfaction. On the first Sunday after Zéphire's complete recovery, we invited Renaud and Mme Deschamps, Boudard and Mlle Mentelle to Zoé's apartment; also Gaudet was to bring his Manon, who had now been with the milliner for two months and was winning the respect of her companions there. Mme Deschamps was the wife of a wine merchant at the sign of *The Wooden Sword*, just opposite the third turnstile into the Louvre; and for figure, dignity of bearing, and nobility of feature, she was perhaps the most beautiful woman in Paris. Mlle Mentelle was very good-looking, but above all she had that studied elegance, natural to an actress, which Paris prefers to beauty. Manon was plump and appetising, with a bright complexion, a milk-white skin, very dark hair and eyebrows, slender legs and long feet. Zoé was tall and slim; she had fine features, black hair and a supple and perfect figure; she moved gracefully, had admirable legs, and her shoes were always exquisitely kept. . . . Zéphire was as tall as Zoé, but with the reed-like slenderness of youth; her fair gold hair was curly, and her eyes, with their pure and pretty glances, were of so deep a blue and so vivacious that they looked black. Her nose bespoke passion, and her pouting lips were as fresh as an opening rose. There was an indescribable grace about her eager walk; her leg aroused desire, and her tiny foot might have been made by Pleasure's self, that child of Love and the celestial Psyche.

I was already with Mlle Delaporte when Renaud and Boudard arrived with their ladies. "I have obeyed your orders," said Renaud to me. "You said that I should not be allowed to see the angelic Zéphire unless I came accompanied by a beautiful lady who would stand sponsor for my behaviour. There she is!" "I find the security good and sufficient," I answered laughing. "And I hardly know if I should serve in that capacity," said Mme Deschamps, "for, in the first place, the young lady's merit may be such that no security would be sufficient, and in the second place, a woman under the dominion of her husband, can be no security in any case." "The qualities of the 'angelic Zéphire' are beyond computation," said Loiseau, "but her merits are equalled by her love." "To love does honour to a woman in my opinion!" exclaimed the fond Mentelle. "And I fully realise what the love of a heart such as hers must be worth." "That is a great truth," said Zoé. "Love is an added virtue in an honest heart. . . . Since a certain person of my acquaintance fell in love . . . she respects herself ten times more than she used to." (She was speaking of herself.) "Well, when are we going to see her?" asked Boudard. "She is coming to dinner with us," answered Zoé. "And M. Gaudet is bringing her sister Manon also."

I set out at once to go and fetch Zéphire. She was waiting for me, as she had not wanted to go with Manon and Gaudet; why, we shall hear presently. She was dressed with exquisite taste; she had removed all that was pretentious from her clothes, so that their elegance was now united with simplicity. One might have said that my young friend was even more perfect than before her motherhood, for she had recovered all the freshness natural to her age, and combined with this a hint of lassitude which went admirably well with her delicate frame. It must be remembered that she was born in May, 1746, so that she was only twelve years and six weeks old; although her physical development, and the temperament that corresponds with this, were those of a girl of sixteen. She was scrupulously clean, and her shoes were a masterpiece of dainty smallness. . . . She had obtained permission to bring *Amélie Suadèle Guisland*, and the latter asked as we set out: "Shall we see her?" "Yes, yes, my dear," answered Zéphire. "He has not even kissed her yet."

It was fine. We walked by way of the *Rue de Savoie* and the *Rue Galande*. As we passed Knapen's, where I worked, I saw the eldest and prettiest of the printer's daughters at the window. I always used to play with this child when she brought the men their candles, escorted by the chambermaid *Victoire*; I liked to make her laugh, so sweet is it to give pleasure to a pretty girl however tender her years. She caught sight of me, and was evidently struck by the beauty and elegance of my companions. She stared at them with admiration, but especially at my Zéphire. I was flattered. . . . Everything was to give me pleasure on that happy day. At last we reached Zoé's house.

END OF VOLUME SEVEN IN RESTIF'S EDITION

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

PROJECTED BY THE AUTHOR

FOR THIS VOLUME

49. THE DUEL

Monsieur Nicolas, in the presence of the three sisters Ferrand, the five Morillon girls, Percinette, Manon Léger, Aurette and Suzon Duchamp, and of those friends mentioned in the text, is drawing swords with Tourangeot the Tartar and wounding him in the throat, to repair the wrong done by the latter to pretty Aglaé Ferrand, to whom he had given a blow when he leapt from the ditch where he was making love to his Marie. Nicolas has said to him: "You have been with the troops: you can stomach a duel?" The wounded man reels and is supported. [*page 29*]

50. THE OLD PATRIOT

Monsieur Nicolas with a good old man, a native of Auxerre, on the high road to Lyons, at a little distance from the bridge and just opposite the garden of René Lebègue, Maîne's uncle, and the father of Agnès. The old man is pointing to the town and asking the youth how long it is since he left it. "Honoured Sir, it is nineteen days to-day since I left the town which is so dear to you!"

Mme Lebègue with her seventeen year old daughter Agnès, and Mme Corbaux with her daughters Eglé and Pauline, can be seen picking peas in the garden. [*page 37*]

51. I TAKE LEAVE OF MADAME PARANGON

Monsieur Nicolas, who has just risen from his knees, receiving a kiss from Madame Parangon, in the presence of his father and Mlle Fanchette. "What would have become of me, without your kind indulgence?" She holds him clasped to her breast for a few minutes, joining his hand to that of Fanchette. [*page 46*]

52. MADAME GRESLOT

Monsieur Nicolas in the house of Victoire Scofon, whom he has just escorted home after supper in the evening. . . . She has touched his cheek, and he leaps forward to take her in his arms. "A caress followed by a liberty led to a complete downfall. . . ." [*page 61*]

53. THE COXCOMB AND THE SONG

Monsieur Nicolas visiting the mistress of a friend. A fop is holding three young girls entranced with an ill-learned song. The hero makes a pitying gesture: "You do not know it." "Sing it better, then." [*page 62*]

54. THE FIRST PROSTITUTE

Monsieur Nicolas in bed, with Argeville, half-undressed, on the point of joining him. Chambon the clockmaker in his shirt is pushing away a less pretty girl, and trying to get hold of Argeville. Boudard, with nothing on but his breeches, is threatening the clockmaker with a lifted chair. "The ugly one is yours; the pretty one belongs to us." [*page 74*]

55. A REMAINS OF VIRTUE

Monsieur Nicolas, after a frugal supper, putting a mattress on the floor for himself, while Jeannette, scantily clad for the night, is climbing into the only bed: "Goodnight, little brother!" "Goodnight, dear little sister!" Through the open door little Leprince and Mme Lallemand, who have been listening, can be seen as they turn to go. [*page 76*]

56. THE RUE DES PRÊTRES-SAINT-SÉVERIN

Monsieur Nicolas, in the boudoir kept by La Macé for important gallantries, throwing aside a book and welcoming a beautiful lady, introduced by La Macé bearing a double candlestick. "It was my beauty of the Pont Saint-Michel." The princess is dressed with a provocative indecency.

Spirette Laval, one of La Macé's girls, can be seen in the glass, taking a sly peep through a door. [*page 95*]

57. DESPAIR

Monsieur Nicolas stretched on his bed in despair, a letter which Tourangeot has just thrown at him crushed in his hand. He is saying furiously to the latter: "It is impossible; you are a liar!"

Bonne Sellier with her sister-in-law Françoise-Sophronie Sellier, and her neighbours, Thérèse the chambermaid and Isabelle Lefaucheux, are seen running at his cries. [*page 113*]

58. ÉLÉONORE

Monsieur Nicolas ill, with three amiable children about him, Sophie-Suzette, Adelaïde or Fillette, and pretty Éléonore. He trembles as the last-named takes his hands. . . . Bonne Sellier, Loiseau, Renaud, Boudard and Zoé are watching him, and Zoé is saying to Bonne: "That child has found a way to touch him." [*page 119*]

59. THE THREE ACTRESSES

Monsieur Nicolas in the Bois de Boulogne, with Mlles Junie Prudhomme and Jacquette Baptiste holding either arm. The latter has given him two blades of grass of unequal length, which he is holding out for them to draw. Their hands are poised hesitatingly and they seem on tenterhooks. "Mlle Prudhomme had the first chance."

In a misty background he is seen crowned with flowers, being led off by his two nymphs. [*page 130*]

60. THE FIRST IMPROMPTU PARTY

Monsieur Nicolas entering Mme Lallemand's back room just as she is satisfying the unnatural passion of Maximine Marie of the coffee-house. Both attire and actions evidence the greatest shamelessness. "Zounds, you are cheating nature!" [*page 146*]

61. SECOND IMPROMPTU PARTY

Monsieur Nicolas sitting at table between Mme Favart and little Rosalie. Junie is on Favart's other side: and Robbé, Guimard, Arnould, Piron, Hus, the Ambassador, Guéant, the Colonel, an actor, Camargo, a dancer, Hallard, Moncenigo are about the table. . . . The last-named is clapping his hands, and one side of the room is seen in darkness. Junie exclaims: "The climax!" [*page 152*]

62. THE NAMES ON THE ARM

Monsieur Nicolas printing on the bared arm of a beautiful girl, in the presence of her mother and elder sister, Mme Hérissant and her husband, Claude, and three workmen, the words read aloud by Mme Hérissant: "JULIE DU RUMIN, whom I adore."

In the background: Lavergne and the two Giraud sisters. [*page 167*]

63. IT WAS ZEPHIRE!

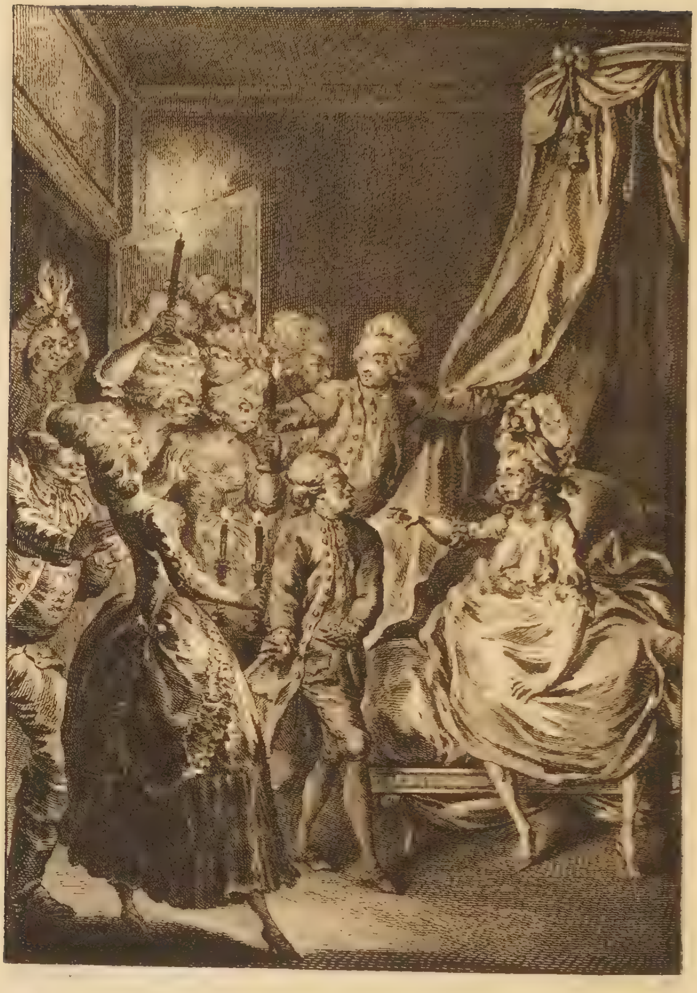
Monsieur Nicolas stretched upon his pallet ill. An elegant young person is wiping away the sweat from his face. She has laid a box of sweetmeats, a big white handkerchief, gloves, bracelets and fan upon his bed. "Who is it?" "Your Zéphire."

An old suit is lying over a broken chair; there is a rickety table behind an old curtain which forms a sort of alcove, the wainscoting is papered with theatrical posters. [*page 172*]

FIFTH EPOCH

Continued

1758-1759



FIFTH EPOCH

(continued)

WHEN we reached Zoé's house, Zéphire ran lightly upstairs, and entered the room without waiting for us. She went straight to Zoé and kissed her, saying: "Good morning, dear friend !. . . " and then going to Loiseau, without having noticed the other guests who were standing to one side: "A little kiss, Monsieur? . . ." As she turned from him, she caught sight of the two ladies, and greeted them shyly, a little confused at having seemed heedless. I came in at this moment, leading Suadèle by the hand. "You never told me I was to meet all these fine ladies . . . as well as my very dear friend?" she gently scolded me in that way which is so charming in a pretty woman. . . . "I wanted to give you a pleasant surprise, my dear. . . ." "Have you a kiss for me, sweet girl?" asked Mme Deschamps going up to her. Zéphire threw her arms round her neck and gave her two, and the beautiful Deschamps kissed her five or six times in return. "And I, Mademoiselle," Mlle Mentelle said, "are you going to leave me out?" Zéphire was in her arms like a flash. "What an adorable child!" said Mme Deschamps, and Mlle Sidonie Mentelle added: "Her beauty and excellence even surpass the idea that I had formed of them." I swelled with happiness, pride and joy, and said within myself: "This masterpiece of nature is mine!" And this was doubly true.

Then Gaudet, who was always somewhat boisterous, was heard upon the stairs, and Zéphire ran out to meet her sister. She led her in by the hand, saying: "Did you go for a walk, my dear, before coming here?" "Yes, by the riverside; he wanted to. We talked together, and I am quite satisfied. All these friends have something of each other in them!" Everyone found Manon a very amiable girl, and said as much to each other without lowering their voices, so that Gaudet, who was already much taken by her, found her even more attractive than before. . . . In the meanwhile Zoé was listening to Suadèle, who was relating various incidents to the credit of Zéphire. . . .

We sat down to table, and everyone was enchanted by Zéphire's sweet nature, and the right thinking which was manifest in her most trivial remark. No longer did they sing her praises, but rather congratulated me; for it was obvious that Zéphire made a god of her lover. Renaud, who appeared a little hard but had, alas, only too much sensibility, let fall a tear, and kissed Mme Deschamps's hand with so expressive a look that she said to him: "I understand . . . but should I ever find that I could no longer resist . . . all that this adorable child . . . makes me feel . . . I would never see her again." Zéphire left the table to wait on us: a very Hebe in her delicate girlhood. (And she served gods that day; for such did our happiness make of us!) . . . What grace! Mme Deschamps regarded her fixedly: "I cannot understand how anyone could find another woman pretty when she is beside Zéphire," she said. Renaud took this beautiful lady by the hand and, making her rise, led her before a glass, saying: "Look at yourself, or let us look at you. . . . If Zéphire is the daintiest of nymphs, the most touching of the Graces, you are Venus, you are Beauty's self!" And truly this woman was ravishing; one could not look at her without a reverent feeling of respect and admiration. She returned to her place, a little flushed, for she had had no suspicion of what Renaud had meant to do. Zoé said: "We have two ladies with us to-day who are all that is most perfect in nature!" "That is my opinion," said Mlle Mentelle. "Ah," exclaimed Loiseau, "but if you could see Zéphire's soul, if you could see Zoé's soul!" "Yes, indeed," said Zéphire tenderly, "my sweet friend's soul, the generous soul which has raised me to her level!" "You mean to have everything!" answered Zoé, kissing her. "Then I should have your infinite merit, my dear and generous friend," replied Zéphire, yielding to Zoé's enfolding arms, and lying on her breast. These two enchanting creatures mingled their caresses: Renaud was weeping; Boudard, who was incapable of intense emotion, smiled in a luxury of quiet satisfaction, such as indolent natures can better appreciate perhaps than more eager minds. Mme Deschamps kept her great black eyes fixed languishingly on the two friends; Sidonie Mentelle was laughing and jesting with Suadèle and Manon, a hand of either in hers. A silence fell. Then young Guisland said: "Do not think, Mesdames, that you are the only people to be so fond of my young companion. Mamma says just the same as Madame" (pointing to Mme Deschamps), "*that no one could find any woman pretty beside Zéphire.* And we all agree. And she has one quality which makes us love her just because everyone speaks well of her; praise only makes her more humble. One day when someone complimented her, she remarked, with that delicate wit which informs all she says: 'It is you who should be proud and pleased: for it is your good advice, which you choose to call praise, which has given me such little merit as I have. . . . Ah, how could I deliberately make mistakes when you have warned me so kindly of what I might do wrong.' And Mamma said that it was angelic to answer a compliment like that." "And I agree," I said, kissing Suadèle's hand. . . . The three ladies embraced Zéphire, and Renaud knelt down in front of her. . . . "Victory!" exclaimed Loiseau clapping his hands. "The critical Renaud does homage to the fairy of my heart!" Renaud kissed the place where she had stood; then turning to Mlle Guisland, he said: "Heavenly Suadèle, another story about Zéphire!" "Mamma says," answered the girl, "that Zéphire's touching simplicity equals her intelligence. The day after she came to us, a pretty young lady said to her: 'Arrange that for me, Mademoiselle.' 'I am as yet too inexperienced, Madame.' 'I wish you to do it.' Zéphire took the bonnet, the lady helped her, and in the end it suited her very well. 'There, you see; it was only that you did not want to do it.' 'Indeed, Madame, I do not know how it happened. Your natural talent must have inspired my hands; not to mention that anything is becoming . . . to people like you.' '*I do not know how it happened!*' exclaimed the young lady to Mamma. 'I think those are the most charming words I have ever heard in my life . . . and the rest shows a ready wit.' It is this easy natural wit that enchants everyone, and especially those who know her best. A week ago another lady said to her: 'Lud, Mademoiselle, you have the settled air of a woman, and yet you have grown nearly three inches since you first came here.' 'That is easily explained, Madame. I look settled because the peace here is so restful after the feverish life I was compelled to lead; now I am growing under the wings of my mistress like a tender plant sheltered from storms and winds.' 'This little girl has a poetical imagination!' said the lady. 'How old are you?' 'In experience and happiness, twenty-five; in actual years not half of that.' 'Why, you are a mere child!' 'As the unopened rose is mother to the flower which will replace her.' Very pretty, very pretty!' said the lady: and she kissed her." Everyone admired the intelligence displayed by so young a girl; the ladies made much of her, and thanked young Suadèle. . . . Gaudet was amazed! He had regarded Zéphire as just one of the "girls" we used to visit together, whose pretty ways had beguiled me. He may have whispered something of what was in his mind to Manon, for she said to us: "Zéphire has the most sensitive and grateful nature. The day on which she heard that Dulis was ill, she ran upstairs all breathless with haste and agitation: 'Help me to dress, sister,' she said. 'I have just heard something . . . ah, something . . . which touches my very life! . . . Dulis is at death's door; and if he dies I shall go with him! . . . I love no one but him; I only live for him. . . . You have seen me weeping every day? It was for him!' She made all haste, and I helped her. 'Send the maid to fetch a carriage, I implore you!' I ran for one myself, as the maid was busy. When I returned Zéphire threw her arms round my neck without a word and ran downstairs. . . . I was surprised that she loved you so tenderly; but I am so no longer, for I see that you deserve it. But however affectionate you may be, I warn you that Zéphire will be ten times more so. . . ." We were listening breathlessly, and when she had finished I threw myself at Zéphire's feet, and exclaimed in an outburst of fervour: "I defy you to feel more for me than I for you! . . . Dear wife, my adored one, why have I not a crown to give you . . . for the virtue that you have restored to me! . . ." "Your heart is the only kingdom I desire," she answered.

We fell into one of those silences where the eyes and the organs of sensibility are more eloquent than speech. Perfect understanding reigned amongst us; our souls were bared; we could read each other's thoughts. "Surely this is the happiness the gods enjoy, my friends," said Loiseau at length. "Indeed, yes," exclaimed Sidonie Mentelle. . . . Mme Deschamps said nothing, but she could not take her eyes off Zéphire and Zoé, who were still clasped in each other's arms, and one could imagine how deeply she was moved! When Zéphire went back to her place, the beautiful woman took possession of her, set her upon her knees and kissed her, and thereafter held her pressed against her heart, uttering from time to time slight sighs of purest rapture. Renaud was afraid lest her emotion were too intense, and besought us to come out for a walk. I held out my arms for Zéphire. "Give her back to me," I said to our fair friend. "She is mine." She gave her to me eagerly, saying: "Yes, she is yours." "If you like, she can be yours too, Madame." "Yes, yes, with all my heart. . . ." And she kissed Zéphire again. (For her daughter whom she had dearly loved would have been just Zéphire's age.)

This was surely meant to be the most beautiful day of my life. . . . As we were speaking, Zoé, Suadèle-Amélie Guisland and Manon (who had left us a few minutes back) entered the room with a nurse, who was carrying a child of about two months old. Zéphire trembled, and was obliged to lean on me for support. . . . They held out the child to her. "She belongs to her father," she said, kissing her. . . . I was drunk with joy and happiness at the sight of Zéphire's daughter and mine. I did not know what I was doing. Finally I fell on my knees, and cried out: "Supreme Being, I dedicate this child to you, and may she be my first-born in your eyes! Deign to bless and to protect her!" "And preserve her from her father's misfortunes!" exclaimed Loiseau. "And from her mother's!" added Zéphire. . . . She took the child in her arms and sat down. Everyone gathered round us, while the mother fondled her baby . . . I saw . . . I seemed to see. . . . Ah, what an enchanting model for a Raphael or a Rubens; from it they might once more have painted the only really touching picture which the old religion has bequeathed to us: a virgin all-beautiful, with the infant God in her arms! . . . This thought occurred to me, it was in the minds of all; and it was my wife and daughter that gave birth to it! Who was ever happier or more proud than I? . . . And who was ever to suffer a more cruel reverse? Alas, I was fated to lose immortality, divinity! To be of the very scum of humanity! To vegetate contemptibly . . . until my death!

We set out taking the child with us, and chose the direction of the nurse's house for our excursion. We took two carriages in the Place Maubert: Zéphire, the nurse, the child, Mme Deschamps, Zoé, Loiseau and I got into one; Sidonie, Suadèle, Renaud and Boudard took the other. Zéphire sat upon my knees with the child in her arms, while Loiseau, opposite to us, politely took the nurse on his. We got out at the *Haute-Borne*, telling our drivers that they would be free for four or five hours. Following the winding paths through the gardens, we came at last to the unspoiled country at the foot of the Ménilmontant hills. "Well, Monsieur le Marquis," said Loiseau to me, "would you change places with anyone to-day?" "Not even with a god!" I answered, swelling with pride and happiness. . . . I walked with Zéphire who was carrying her daughter, and each of the others had his lady. I said to my sweetheart: "If I had not loved you before, my child, this day alone would have won all my adoration." "Ah, my dear, I only want to be lovable so as to make you happy! . . . In the life from which you took me we were taught to devote ourselves to men, to live for nothing but to satisfy their caprices; of that I only want to keep the absolute devotion, and to feel it for none but you. . . . You spoke to my heart the very first moment that I saw you. . . . And that moment, my friend, came before ever you entered our house. One day, when I was out with Mamma, you happened to pass in front of us. She looked at you, and said: "If that young man's hair was not so dark, I should have fancied that I had met him in my youth! His face comes back to me vividly. . . ." Then we lost sight of you. But that first day on which I spoke to you, I recognised you at the far end of the Rue Jean-Saint-Denis, and I was terrified lest you should stop for one of the unfortunate women who were soliciting you. But no, I said to myself, he is too dainty for such unclean horrors. . . . When you reached the Rue Saint-Honoré and raised your eyes to me, do you remember how I smiled at you and beckoned? My heart beat fast with pleasure, but with fear too, lest you would pay no attention to me. Oh, how I trembled when I saw you enter the passage; when, having opened the door, I heard you coming upstairs! When I saw you! I believe I should have gone downstairs and run after you if you had passed by. . . . But you came in, and we talked together; and you know the rest. . . ." "Yes," I answered, pressing her hand to my heart, "I know the rest." "Judge then, dear friend," she continued, "how I must have suffered when you no longer came to see me!" "Oh my Zéphire, I fled away from my happiness! . . . My Zéphire . . . my angel, the very extravagance of our story makes me cherish you the more. I will love you to the day of my death! . . . I give up all idea of any other marriage, however advantageous, and devote myself entirely to you. . . . And if ambition is born in me some day, it will be the outcome of my love and of your worth! . . ."

Then Boudard and his sweet friend accosted us. "You are talking very seriously!" said the actress. "Ah, he has been saying such kind things to me!" answered Zéphire. "My heart is overflowing." "And she has been saying even kinder things to me!" I exclaimed. "You dear children!"

"You and Zéphire feel alike," said Boudard to his friend. "You are an actress, and yet you are sincere and sympathetic." "My friend, are you afraid of the word *fond*? It never passes your lips." "But it is in my heart for you, Mademoiselle, and for you alone." "What a charming remark!" exclaimed Zéphire. "I find it so," answered the actress. "And I mean to love you as much as Mme Deschamps and Zoé love you. If I had known you in time, your friend would have found you in my profession." "I prefer manual work," Zéphire said quickly. "My friend has his craft and, if all else failed him, I should keep a hat shop and manage it while he was out; so we should live at peace, sheltered by the laws which protect honest citizens. In the evening my husband would make up my books, as Monsieur Guisland does for his wife. I am economical and industrious; he is steady and intelligent: we should soon be comfortably off. . . . Ah, how happy I shall be when . . ." She checked herself, blushing; and it was the first time I had ever seen her blush. Modesty was beginning to develop; a new experience to Zéphire, as she had been prostituted to the amusement of men before modesty is born in us. . . .

The other couples, seeing that we were walking slowly, because the nurse had stopped to suckle the infant and Suadèle would not leave her, turned back to join us: "What are you talking about," asked Mme Deschamps. "We are listening to a little housekeeper describing the management of her future household," answered Sidonie. "I think she was just going on to the education and the marriage of her children, when you interrupted. She will make an excellent housekeeper for she is very practical, and I should feel the greatest confidence in her." She repeated what Zéphire had just said, and both Mme Deschamps and Zoé were delighted. The former took possession of my little friend. "I want to talk to her alone," she said, and they went away together. "The strongest bond between Mme Deschamps and myself I owe to you," said Renaud to me. He took Sidonie's free arm (he had conceived a high esteem for her) and I walked on Zoé's left; so that both arms of our fair companions were engaged. Gaudet and Manon were even farther behind us than Suadèle and the nurse, and seemed to have an inexhaustible fund of conversation. So Loiseau entertained the five of us by discoursing on the phenomena of nature. He was interrupted by his Zoé, who remarked: "Zéphire is in admirable hands! I know no woman in the world whose virtue is more firmly rooted: she has a lover of most excellent character, whose attentions her husband has, so to say, himself forced her to receive; I believe that she returns his love and yet she behaves with him as though he were her brother. That is all she permits herself. And it is she who is now talking to Zéphire. I predict the best results from their conversation, and from the affection which she manifests for our little friend. . . . She will give her discreet, enlightened advice on more than one subject, and this will make her even more amiable in her lover's eyes."

At this moment Zéphire looked back at us and smiled; she blew me a kiss, and then gave all her attention again to the fair Deschamps.

"Your last observation is most true, Mademoiselle," said Loiseau to his sweetheart, "and I am overjoyed by all that has come to pass! Our dear friends have greatly added to our happiness by coming to see us to-day, for whatever befalls my friend Nicolas, whether good or bad, befalls me also." "And if anything good happens to me," I broke in, "I never enjoy it wholly until you have shared it, and if anything bad, then, by telling you about it, I halve my misfortune." "That is true friendship!" said Zoé, and Renaud exclaimed with the enthusiasm for anything noble which was natural to him: "At last I have found that divine friendship which I have always desired! I see it; I take part in it! . . . We four must keep together; we five even, for that big lad there" (pointing to Gaudet) "seems a good fellow. We think alike, and what you say always finds an answer in my heart." "United we can better front adversity," answered Loiseau. "Wealth is not for us, so let us give up all thought of it; but happiness we can find in poverty. . . . Ah, cruel fortune! Twice she has smiled upon me, four times I should say, counting my friend as myself, and has only smiled to deceive me. Now I am afraid of her; and I shall still be afraid, even should she return with full hands; I shall fear her to the day of my death." "But poverty is a painful business at times!" I said. "I agree; but, on the other hand, think of the happiness it can bestow. Do not let us be ungrateful to her, my friend, since she has made us happy! . . . Do you know that fine passage in praise of poverty in Aristophanes's Plutus*? . . . Ah, I have never realised the truth of it so deeply as in our present circumstances! We are poor: you fall ill; I nurse you; I have nothing to give you but the fruit of my labour; I share the product of my sweat, one might

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*I recommend the reading of this passage and would quote it here, had I not lost my Aristophanes since I moved from my lodging with Pointcloud, parliamentary lawyer, of 10 Rue des Bernardins, during the bitter winter, 1788-89. This scoundrel, for no other reason than a personal caprice and the profound malice of his black heart, gave me notice at a time when I was cumbered with the whole edition of my *Nuits de Paris* and with the second edition of the last twenty-four volumes of *Les Contemporaines*, etc. The move cost me more than four hundred livres. But that was not the worst. A man of letters should never change his residence, even for the better. Hurried away by the infamous Pointcloud, seriously insulted by his clerk, Foigny, incommoded by the rigour of the season, the business was done anyhow: my things were spoilt, destroyed, lost or stolen. I lost more than a thousand crowns through the move. . . . And even that was not the worst! Now, seven years later (6th March, 1795), I have still not been able to get my things in order, for want of space, or to find my books or my scattered thoughts. . . . And Pointcloud and his Foigny vegetate placidly in the shelter of the laws that protect lawyers!

almost say of my life blood, with my dear invalid! Great God, what rapture (if only my earnings had sufficed) to save my friend by my own energy and ability! . . . If I had been rich I should have given him money which would have cost me nothing; I should have paid for a nurse instead of nursing him myself, and I should have thought myself generous. But what interest should I have taken in a convalescence that was not my work? I should have watched it almost indifferently. . . . And if my friend had been rich, he would have paid me back and cleared himself of his debt, unemotionally, as one pays in money for services rendered in money; and possibly our friendship would have ended there. Whereas the need that we may have of one another, and our proved goodwill, is a secret tie which binds us together whether we like or no. My friend thinks to himself: 'But this Loiseau certainly loves me; I must love him too, for . . . he was given to me by Madame Parangon; he is . . . one more of her good gifts. . . .' " "Oh, oh! You shake me to the soul, my friend; and pleasure turns to pain!" "May no delightful day ever pass," exclaimed Loiseau, "without her name being pronounced, and her memory lamented!" Before he had finished speaking I was on my knees, uttering cries and dissolved in tears. . . . I was at the point of death. . . . Zéphire flew to me and raised me in her arms. She restored me to life. . . . "I weep for a friend. . . . Do not be jealous, Zéphire." "Ah, if it is for *her* . . . I will weep with you! . . ." "Have you ever studied the 'thermometer' of sensibility, affection and love, and of all sincere and honest emotion?" said Loiseau. "If I had wanted. . . . One degree more of emotion, and . . . I should have killed him. . . ." "Ah, do not kill him!" exclaimed Zéphire, terrified and almost throwing herself at his feet. . . . Loiseau took her hand and restored her to Mme Deschamps: "Take this child away, wise friend. . . ." He spoke as a god who can command nature, and then continued describing what I would say or think, as though he had not been interrupted: "And I am sure my friend says to himself that Loiseau will never be ungrateful. For whenever Nicolas has helped me, as he has done so many times since his illness and before it, how zealous has been his service and what joy it gave him! To give help makes him a hundred times more happy than to receive it, for well I understand his fine character! . . . Again, if I were rich, should I appreciate, as I do appreciate, the value of Mlle Zoé's goodness? Who could convince me that it was I she loved and not my fortune? Ah, treacherous riches, you can never poison my happiness! I am loved for myself, for I am loved without you. . . . If my friend had been born rich, would he have had his Zéphire? Would he even have known the real heart of this celestial child? If he had not been poor to the last degree of want, would he have felt the value of her sacrifice? If he had lain at his ease on a magnificent bed, would he have found the pretty hand that cleansed and comforted so sweet? Would he have had that delicious time of mingled fear and hope on the Quai des Orfèvres? Would he have sought Zoé's help in placing his young friend, thus uniting them by the ties of service and sweet and holy friendship? No. More likely, instead of that masterpiece of virtue, Zéphire, he would have had some kept girl who would have mocked at him while ruining him. . . . And even if he had known this charming child, riches harden the heart; he would have thought himself too good for her, and would have deserted her!" "Ah," exclaimed Zoé with touching simplicity, "then let us be always poor and never rich, since money makes people hard and ungrateful!" "If Renaud were rich," continued Loiseau, "how could he have ever been certain that this charming woman, who is now saying things of moment to Zéphire, valued him for himself, for his outstanding merit and his uncompromising virtue? . . . And if Boudard were rich, wherein would lie the charm of your mutual attachment, Mlle Sidonie? Where would be the sweetness and the pride of being favoured by a woman who could have a millionaire at her feet? . . . Oh, Poverty, celestial Poverty! Pardon our ingratitude in not recognising your gifts! Through you I have a treasure of ardent affection in the heart of my friend! Through you I adore Zoé! Through you my friend is exalted above Kings in the destiny of love; through you my two other friends are happy! Divine Poverty, accept my homage! . . . Were it not for you, my friends and I would be the gulls of tricksters . . . the victims of unprincipled women; we should be as the rich whom we daily see, duped by rogues and schemers, by our mistresses and our valets. . . . It is through poverty that we are ourselves; that our moral being is assured. No one flatters us. If anyone says: *I love you*, it does not mean: *I am going to cheat you*. . . . Let us bless poverty, my friends! Let us sing a hymn in her honour; and I will undertake to compose it."

Such was the for ever memorable discourse of my dear friend. Boudard, Renaud, and the two ladies listened with emotion, and when he had finished speaking, silence reigned. . . . He put his arm about my shoulders and we walked on thus.

At last Zéphire and Mme Deschamps rejoined us. "Ah, if you had only heard him!" exclaimed Sidonie, pointing to Loiseau. "I do not think we will ever hear more heartening words. . . . That man is a god of consolation!" "I know that well," answered Zéphire. "His appearance alone inspires confidence." "You have just had a still more interesting conversation with this sweet lady, have you not?" interrupted Loiseau. "Oh yes, most interesting," answered Zéphire. "Madame is goodness itself to me." "One cannot with justice be anything else," answered the fair Deschamps. "Do not be anxious," she added, looking at me, "I have said nothing against your interests." "On the contrary, Madame, anything that is to her advantage is doubly so to mine." "It will make me more worthy of thee . . . of you," said Zéphire, catching herself up (and this correction from "thee" to "you" shed a ray of light on the conversation that had just taken place), "and I shall love you more than ever, I think." It was obvious to all of us that this model of propriety had just given Zéphire some lessons in maidenliness and circumspect behaviour; she had also given her others more essential, but the former were infinitely important to one who had been in Zéphire's trade.

Seeing us all standing in a circle (for Zéphire had flown to fetch Suadèle and the nurse and baby), Gaudet and Manon rejoined us; and the light talk that followed was a tonic to those of us who were over sensitive. After a little while the six ladies went apart, no doubt to hear something about the conversation between Renaud's sweet friend and Zéphire. "We will leave you for a few moments," Zoé said, and joined her friends, taking Manon with her, though Gaudet made as though to keep her. . . . At once Loiseau set the example and we began to amuse ourselves as young men should, climbing to the tops of hills and racing each other down, playing at quoits and competing in trials of strength and skill, etc.

We grew hungry. As Loiseau did not like the idea of taking the ladies into any of the neighbouring wine gardens, he had made other arrangements and, at his signal, my host appeared on one of the heights, with a basket on his back and another in his hand. The fruiterer-billsticker set down his burden in a sheltered place; a cloth was laid upon the mossy grass of a little terrace and Loiseau spread the provisions upon it. Two of us went in search of the ladies, while the other three spread a piece of canvas which had been brought expressly for them so that they should not spoil their dresses. We took our places as our hearts directed, and enjoyed a delicious supper (for it was nearly seven o'clock) in the open air. Wine tastes ten times better to a dry throat, as we know, and bread is more appetising when hunger seasons it. Even the ladies ate voraciously. The repast did not last long, for we were too busy to talk. It was still broad daylight when our appetites were at last satisfied; so we formed a circle round Zéphire, whose harp had been brought by my landlord, and Loiseau produced his Hymn to Poverty, with the air noted in, and said to her: "Tender young Zéphire, succourer of the poor, it is right that you should be the one to sing this Hymn which your poor *Losolis* has composed in praise of his goddess." Zéphire must have been prepared; for she preluded and then sang without hesitation to her own accompaniment:

> *Honour to our God! Accept our offering, O divine Poverty, with homage in the simple and unsullied speech which gratitude dictates to the friends of humanity!* (End.)
>
> *You give happiness and wisdom; and there is nought save kindness beneath your harsh and savage guise! You redouble the strength of true Friendship in the breast of adversity!*
>
> *You dignify pity; it is no longer an empty display, a canting show of affected charity: it becomes a sincere proof of pleasant cordiality.*
>
> *Honour etc.*

We sang the first six lines again together, and demanded an encore. Zéphire sang admirably; Mlle Mentelle took the second and Loiseau the bass. We found the hymn even more beautiful on a second hearing. Ten times it was sung, and in the end we were all taking part except Gaudet. "Now everyone has sung save me," he said. "I have reserved myself for my own composition. For more than three months, without exaggeration, I have been trying to find out what is wrong with these two verses, which the author tore up and threw away after writing them: I have turned them about and changed them according to my lights, and finished them at last this morning." And he mopped his forehead. "Let us have them!" shouted everyone. Gaudet coughed, spat, blew his nose and asked Zéphire to play a few chords to give him the note. Then he began, to a tune which he had adapted from a memory of that cheerful air,

Is there any harm in that?

but transforming it into a dragging and lamentable dirge. These were the words:

> *There were two poor children who had not a stitch or halfpenny, and one of these two fell ill, and without money! Day and night the other worked, very painfully, very sorrowfully!*
>
> *O poverty, you caused her glory, and history shall tell of it!*
>
> *At the height of their misfortune, a young great-hearted girl, eager and pretty, came to their dwelling, and gave them charity. Her sister gave also, and thus the gift was augmented.*
>
> *O poverty etc.*

The same honour was done to Gaudet's romance as to that of our choragus. The words were altered to suit the air, and the ladies finally managed to sing them without dislocating their jaws. "Ah, if I had had time, and Nicolas's brain and facility, I would have written ten verses! But I will have the others ready by this time next year. I belong to Horace's school and spend a long time polishing what I have done. . . . Would you believe that the last two lines of the second verse took me six weeks? And even then they were only provisional." "They express a reality," said Zéphire. "Ah, then I am happy indeed," exclaimed Gaudet; "for in that case they are a work of genius." "Leave it to us to praise you," said Renaud. "God forbid! You would be much too niggardly!" answered Gaudet quickly. "Besides, no one knows what this work, my masterpiece, my ewe lamb, has cost me in sweat and anguish. The least I can do is to praise it! My lawyer, Monsieur or Maître Fardeau, thought my two verses good; at least he did not change them. . . . He must have liked them, because he said I showed as much talent . . . as himself. . . ."

Gaudet was interrupted by the nurse coming to say good-bye to us. Loiseau took my daughter in his arms and, holding her up to Heaven, said: "Child of love and virtue, one day to be as fair as your mother, live only for her happiness and for your own! One day you will learn from Zéphire and Zoé, from Élise Leriche, Sidonie, Suadèle and Manon Blaisot that your sex is an instrument of felicity, and that a woman is nothing if she does not make a man happy! . . . May heaven bless you and joy spring from you! . . ." "So be it, amen! . . ." we answered. Each of us gave the nurse a little present and one of our carriages took her home.

At the same moment we severally experienced a need for more intimate conversation, and, by tacit consent, couple after couple drifted away, until we were divided into six groups, each gallant lying at his charmer's feet. My Zéphire was reclining in my arms; Zoé was sitting beside Loiseau, one arm thrown carelessly about his shoulders; Renaud and Élise Leriche were leaning against a rick of lucerne; Mlle Mentelle found a little hollow and Boudard followed her there; Gaudet and Manon were farther off, out of our sight but well in view of any one on the path coming down the hill. Finally Suadèle, who had at first been taken off by Manon, came back to Zéphire and myself. . . . All of us were in that state of mental content which follows the satisfaction of the body's needs; we tasted the joys of mere existence most deliciously, and the more so because we tasted them in the company of our sweethearts. . . . Loiseau, who always dressed a little bit like a schoolmaster, had moved slightly in front of Zoé and they were talking affectionately. One of my arms encircled Zéphire and the other Suadèle, and the two girls, their own arms intertwined, were saying all kinds of pretty things to me and to each other. In an outburst of tenderness, Zéphire exclaimed: "If I die my lover will not lose all happiness, for I shall leave him another Zéphire in my Suadèle-Amélie! . . . If you could see how pleased she is when your voice is heard in the evening! She is as pleased as I am. When you are due, she will often sing:

The charms of another Fair
Lie all in her simple heart:

or:

When Hebe served the Gods with wine,

to distract the others' attention from me when I begin to sing on your coming to our road. . . . She loves you; she has told me so; and far from being jealous, it only makes me love her more. We talk of nothing but you." And she caressed Suadèle, who was so deeply moved that she wept a little. Then Zéphire sang sotto voce:

To wipe away Beauty's
Weeping when she has wept because of you,
Whate'er the cost
Is past belief the most
Sweet of all sweet things that a man can do.

Renaud, who had at first kept a decent distance between himself and Élise, had gradually coaxed her almost into his arms; Boudard and Sidonie had not seen each other for a week, as the former worked in a clandestine press, and had so much to say to each other that every sense was talking at once. . . . The attitude of Gaudet and Manon was probably still more eloquent, judging from the well-known propensities of the former and the natural facility of the latter. Zéphire, while listening attentively to what I was saying, glanced often at the crowd which seemed to be gathering in front of us. "What a lot of people there are upon the hill!" she said. "Why, yes!" said Suadèle. I raised my head and scrutinised the crowd; then dropped my enchanted eyes to her again, and said: "I can see no one but you . . . O my Zéphire, our union is the work of Destiny. Not of my own will did I raise my eyes to your window and fix them on you alone" (I was careful not to "thou" her since her conversation with Mme Deschamps) "when I was walking down the Rue Jean-Saint-Denis, and come upstairs to you without being able to help myself; an invisible power directed me; it was Nature herself who guided my steps towards the destined object!" "Do you really believe that, dear friend?" "Do I believe it, child? It is the truth." "Then I am happy! . . . dear Suadèle, imagine my happiness! It was nature that gave us to each other! . . . And I wish you could know how contented I am at home with my mistress, dear friend; free to be as honest as I wish, as I have always wished to be! Treated by men with a courtesy to which I was a stranger . . . until I met you. . . . And my kind mistress, my kind friends, and all my fellow workers! My Suadèle who is so sympathetic, so obliging and so generous towards an unfortunate girl!" "I shall tell Mamma," answered Suadèle, "that she does not as yet know the half of your worth or the goodness of your heart. But I must not interrupt you, dear. . . ." "Reflecting on all my good fortune," continued Zéphire, "I think to myself and often say to Suadèle: 'And I owe all this happiness to my friend!' I know something about music, and every evening I go over my lessons with the other girls, and my Suadèle now knows as much as I do. We give little concerts, and always sing the verses my dear friend has written to me; among others, that hymn which you brought me on your third visit:

> *Ah, Venus, what delights! We must lay our arms at the feet of this young Beauty! She is made in your likeness.*
>
> *O Venus, she is your pledge that you never deserted the features on the face of Percy,* for these live in her daughter!*
>
> All three:
> *Ah, Venus, what delights! We must lay our arms at the feet of this young Beauty!*
>
> Zéphire:
> *I am a bird flying from a goshawk; but my consolation is in love.*
>
> All:
> *Ah, Venus, etc.*
>
> Zéphire:
> *I am the bud that will burst into a rose. Save me from being plucked; let no bold hand bruise me!*
>
> All three:
> *Ah, Venus, etc.*
>
> Zéphire:
> *The storm mutters about me, I hear its growling! Who shall protect me from its cruel ravages?*
>
> All three:
> *Ah, Venus, etc.*
>
> Zéphire:
> *I am a bird flying, etc.*

Here Zéphire broke off to look up again at the group on the hill, which had gathered like a storm cloud above us. "Listen," she said. They were shouting: *Hi there, Monsieur l'Abbé, hi there,* and staring towards us. Through an optical illusion Loiseau looked from the hill to be in a very intimate position with Zoé, and the crowd had taken him for an abbé. We could all be seen from this post of vantage, and with Gaudet and Manon, still more exposed than the rest of us, there was perhaps no question of illusion. I was the only one who, having two girls with me, might appear above suspicion; or, on the other hand, my attitude may have seemed the more scandalous for this. . . . However their ill-will was all directed against the supposed abbé. I warned our friends. "They are shouting at us!" I called out. Loiseau rose to his feet, and blushed when I pointed out that he was specially addressed. We all got up, twelve of us with the fruiterer whom we had summoned. Immediately ten or twelve fellows detached themselves from the group on the hill and, only seeing half of our number, rushed upon us. Boudard, six foot one in height and dressed in the uniform of a Sergeant of the Guards, which had been given him by his employer of the clandestine press, scorned the idea of flight, and Renaud, who was less than five feet but thickset and strong, was even more pugnacious; Gaudet, a "Borromean" of five foot eight, was our other giant, and he flared his wide nostrils like a stallion scenting the mares. Personally I was inclined to wait a little and see what these inquisitive persons had to say for themselves; but Loiseau, wiser than all of us, pointed out that the ladies must not be seen by them on account of the mistake that they had made. This argument decided us, in view of the fact that Élise Leriche (Mme Deschamps) was, as an actress, well known, and perhaps also Manon, about whom a hundred tales could have been told. So we took refuge among the vines and thickets, Loiseau shepherding the ladies like a timid flock, while we brought up the rear. Gaudet and the fruiterer (the latter armed with the spit which he had brought with him to cook our supper at the nurse's house) remained twenty or thirty paces behind. Coming upon a middle-class dwelling, we asked permission to rest there for a little, and the owners granted our request with great politeness. But Gaudet and the fruiterer did not enter with us, and Loiseau was beginning to get anxious when we heard shouts. . . . We ran to the help of our comrade, imploring the women not to appear whatever they might hear – all except Zéphire, and she followed us. On reaching the scene of battle, we found two men already knocked out and Gaudet engaged with a third, a tall strong fellow, whom he got down as we came up; a fourth was on his knees with the fruiterer standing over him, apparently threatening to spit him. Six or seven poltroons, who had been looking on from a distance, fled at our approach. We separated Gaudet from his antagonist; the fruiterer burst out laughing, and his victim was off like a flash; the injured dragged themselves away as best they could, and the battle ended for lack of opponents. The people of the house had been watching us from their windows, and, on our return, asked us the cause of the scrimmage. Gaudet, a trifle blood-stained, was busy cleansing himself; so that it was Loiseau who explained in modest terms why we had been pursued, and won thereby respect and consideration for us all. We left at once to join our carriages, which the fruiterer had brought on to the main road opposite the house, with many thanks to these good people for their hospitality. . . .

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*Zéphire's mother.

Standing by the carriages, Gaudet related how he had been attacked by the two most agile of our pursuers, with shouts of *Hi there! Hi!* He had slackened his pace to await them, and knocked them over with a couple of back-handed blows. Then the big man had come to their rescue, and he had been obliged to clinch with him, while the fruiterer with his spit checked and held a fourth who was coming to his help. We got into the carriages and took the ladies to their doors, beginning with Zéphire, Suadèle and Manon, to whom we promised a musical goodnight on our way home. It was past eleven by the time we had deposited Mlle Mentelle. The carriages were dismissed and Mlle Zoé returned on foot with the men.

As we came out of the Rue Christine, I sang:

Hola, do you sleep or wake, my fair Elvira! Here is your adoring lover. . . .

Zéphire had just been giving her companions their music lesson, and they all came to their windows. Then Loiseau broke into the first verse of a ballad of mine which we had agreed to sing on this evening:

Old Man:

I admire fair Nature at morn and eve of a fine day! I delight in the pure sweet flame which lights a virtuous love; I like to see impetuous youth succumb so readily to beauty; to see slow age at times retaste the joy of love.

Suadèle:

I admire this sensitive being who shrinks away from a touch: I love the artless beauty who can calm her lover; I delight in her who best can charm the hearts of men undangerously, but I delight above all in her who keeps her morals.

Boudard:

I admire an incorruptible integrity in the bosom of distress; a prudent sagacity in hot-headed youth: I delight in a pleasant liberality going hand in hand with great wealth, and a noble generosity in a warm-hearted mistress.

Zéphire:

I admire the fondness which old age gives to undocile youth, for all its fickle, naughty heart. There are means, Ladies and Gentlemen, of making your lot a sweeter one: weave equal threads to make a happy whole.

(Verse applauded by the neighbours at their windows.)

(I sang the following verse in the snuffling tones of an old woman in a doorway, a little distance off.)

I admire at the way everyone is caught by a pretty face! Not that I blame them, but how can they justify this thing? I myself would love a sober fellow, offering honest attachment: an ugly woman is more amenable, more given to sentiment.

Manon:

I admire the prudence with which a wise man leads us! I delight in his unfailing foresight and the success and fortune which it brings. May the husband to whom I give myself have all my confidence and trust as well as my heart, my hand and my body – for therein lies my happiness.

Gaudet:

I, for my part, admire the way that nothing astonishes the sweet object of my loves . . . (he did not finish).

Renaud:

I admire the touching Beauty who holds me eternally captive . . . (he ceased).

Zoé:

I admire strength of soul, a heart shaken by love and burning with eager flame when the lover has deserved it. My hopes are set upon the perseverance of my wise and tender conqueror; I will adore the indulgence to which I owe his heart.

We stopped singing so as not to disturb the neighbours, although they seemed to be enjoying our performance. Zéphire blew us a wordless kiss, and we heard her singing as we went away:

I go carelessly into the meadow; now I am alone save for my flocks, etc.

When we were nearly at the corner of the *Rue Pavée* I sang

Addio, addio, my sweet friend!

After we had taken Zoé back to her house in the Rue Galande, we went our separate ways home, Loiseau to the *Rue de la Huchette*, Gaudet to the *Rue des Lombards*, Boudard to the *Rue de Charenton*, Renaud to the *Rue de Bourbon* (Faubourg Saint-Germain), and finally myself to the Rue Sainte-

Anne. So this happy day came to an end . . . but the joy of it lasted all through the week. . . . And now I am paying for these exquisite pleasures in tears. . . . Dear Reader, imagine what I suffered when, twenty-two years later, deceived and betrayed by *Sara*, I found myself in that self-same quarter dining with my rival, *Blanchard-Lavalette*! . . . I had to leave the table to get air, and went to stand in a corridor which overlooked the landscape. I watched the lovers passing arm in arm with their faithful sweethearts, and my heart swelled to bursting; I gazed upon the slopes which Loiseau and Zéphire had made holy, and I burst into tears. . . .

We made similar excursions more than once, as the ladies found them delightful. Renaud too was so enchanted by them that, one Sunday, he brought Élisabeth Leriche's husband (his friend Deschamps), and also her brother and his betrothed. Deschamps's explanation of his strange behaviour in himself giving his wife a lover was as follows: in a disreputable quarter such as the Carrousel, he was certain that attempts would be made to ensnare the virtue of so beautiful a woman as his wife; therefore he had himself encouraged her intimacy with a man of high principles, and had done everything in his power to make her love him, because, as he said, *of two evils we must choose the lesser.* So he had given her an honest man for lover to prevent her being seduced by a blackguard. And the interesting thing is that he was justified in the event, but I cannot advise anyone to follow his example: men like Renaud and Loiseau are unique and I have never found their like; any more than I have ever found women like Colette, Zéphire, Madelon Baron, Edmée Servigné, Colombe, or Marianne Tangis. Mme Deschamps's friendship with a man of good principles had this result: he did not seduce her himself, and yet prevented anyone else from having access to her.

The day on which Deschamps joined our party Renaud found him an agreeable little companion in Mme *Werkawin*, the wife of the foreman of the Galeries du Louvre. Apparently Deschamps found her very much to his taste; probably because she was vivacious, and had a little touch of Cleopatra in her temperament which was always much in evidence after dinner. Mme Deschamps's brother, Leriche, was with Rosalie Guisland, Suadèle's sister; Mme Guisland had confided her to her future sister-in-law. . . . It was in connection with this girl that a little incident related in *La Malédiction Paternelle* occurred. The young man (who was playing in *Le Génie*), observing the good understanding and kindly freedom which prevailed in our little society, inferred that we were all happy lovers, not excluding his sister, whose propriety he attributed to good taste. So he took considerable liberties with his intended, justifying himself by our behaviour with each other of which he knew nothing. Loiseau overheard his remarks and persuaded us to go in a body and take him by surprise. Then, in our presence, he remonstrated seriously with the young man, and was thanked for this by his sister. That was what actually happened; for here I must rectify facts that I have romanticised a little in my other Works. . . .

On this occasion, knowing that Mme Guisland had not spent the day in the country as was her wont, we all escorted Zéphire, Suadèle and Rosalie home in the evening. The milliner was delighted to see her daughters and her pupil in such good company; for she had the greatest respect for Mme Deschamps and Mlle Zoé. These two ladies and the sprightly Werkawin had a private conversation with her, after which she went up to Zéphire and kissed her twice. . . . She had always welcomed me kindly; but after her talk with the two ladies of the Carrousel, there was something even more affectionate in her manner towards me. . . .

Rosalie gave me a hint as to the reason for this. In the course of her private talks with Mme Deschamps and Zoé, Zéphire had said in answer to certain questions: "I do not have to protect myself against my friend because, out of respect for my excellent mistress and her house and for my sweet friends, her daughters; and out of consideration for myself, who am forced to be more reserved than others in my behaviour, he never asks for anything that could offend my sensibility or anyone else's. He said to me yesterday evening: 'On the day of your apprenticeship you became a young girl living in the home of honourable parents, with whose knowledge I am seeking you in marriage. I must respect you as the future mother of my children, and, as my life's companion, must guard you from all weakness and anything that might make me ashamed for my other self. We have but one honour between us, my child, and to degrade you is to degrade myself. I must honour you in order to honour myself; I will respect you as I must respect myself and the chastity of your body is the chastity of mine. . . .' That is what my friend said to me." And that is why Mme Guisland kissed Zéphire, and treated her friend with more consideration.

Every Sunday was more or less a repetition of these two. When the weather was bad we read together some rare and stimulating work provided by Boudard or Renaud, either at Renaud's lodgings, which were comfortable, or in Sidonie Mentelle's or Zoé's apartment; or, when it was Zéphire's turn to keep shop, at Mme Guisland's, who gave us the use of her parlour. Suadèle and Rosalie were always of our party; but when our session was held at Mme Guisland's, all her family and pupils joined us also for the reading and for dinner, after which we played games or, when we were given tickets, went to the theatre.

We know what my temperament was like, and yet, though surrounded during these parties by very pretty women, I never felt the least temptation to be unfaithful to Zéphire; not through virtue, I do not think I had enough of it for that, but through the inexpressible tenderness which filled my heart. It was this rather than Zéphire's beauty which kept me constant, although she combined everything that most pleased me: a pretty face, softly and delicately moulded; lovely eyes, eager and yet modest; a mouth like a just opening rose; a perfect bust (her mother's had been superb) and a divine waist; legs that were slender without being skinny, and the smallest and most beautifully shaped foot, as is proved by those of her shoes which I have kept; an exquisite taste in dress and lovely hair, as fine as Mme Parangon's,* but golden; a soft voice, harmonious and appealing; a diction which moved the soul; a sweet, obliging and loveable character; a temperament, ardent like Mme Parangon's, but which, in the same way, resolved itself in tenderness; agreeable talents and . . . an unfathomable love. This last quality of perfection does not make us men faithful, but it does make us happy. I have often proved the truth of what Blanchard-Lavalette (my rival in Sara's affections) said to me long afterwards: "When we are certain of being loved, we are perfectly ready to run after other women; we are gay, careless and flirtatious. But should our mistress seem disposed to inconstancy, then we become more punctilious, more eager in our attentions and more scrupulously faithful, never reflecting that this show of anxiety precipitates her inconstancy instead of averting it." This Lavalette (the *Passepartout* of the 184th *Contemporaine*) was a subtle rogue; a secret censor, friend of such as *Dhemmery, Desmarolles, Lenoir* and of tyrants like them and of their spies; also he himself was a spy. . . . So it was not Zéphire's constancy and ardent tenderness, nor her flattering and exclusive preference for myself that kept me faithful. It was a . . . paternal sentiment. . . . I never saw her face to face save on Saturday evenings, Sundays and holidays; but every day I was happy through her. As we know, she heard my voice every evening and, without her being aware of it, I used to see her face light at my signal. Sometimes I would watch my young friend for a little while before giving it: she would be alert and rather restless, speaking little or not at all to her companions. I gave the signal: a start of joy, an eager smile, a glance towards the window, and she would draw her curtain a little without turning round; she scintillated with pleasure, and every movement expressed her rapture! . . . These evening interludes were as delightful as my Sundays, when I was near Zéphire and could talk to her; and the charm of expectation made my whole day beautiful. I was not deterred by rain; and then, after the first explosion of her joy, my Zéphire would express, by slight compassionate gestures, her longing to guard me from the storm. At first my signal was the latest song, one which Zéphire did not yet know; the road was very deserted so that I could sing at my ease. Zéphire's fellow-workers always listened too, but only she was in the secret and she shared it with no one, except with her dear Suadèle after the latter had begun to join our parties. No one suspected me, because I had the freedom of the house and was always welcome; and, as I never appeared on weekdays, they assumed that I was busy all the time. . . . If I felt any fear lest my voice at its full should be recognised, I would go close up to Zéphire's window and, *sotto voce*, improvise words upon any operatic or vaudeville air that came to mind from what I had heard at the *Italiens* or the *Vaudeville* theatre; giving her a regular discourse in prose, and sometimes most agreeably modulated. She listened attentively and answered by some sign that I could see, or with another air which she sang carelessly, as though to herself. I kept eyes and ears alert for any inquisitive person coming out of the house, and was off before I was recognised: moreover I was muffled in a Spanish cloak which I never wore when I called at the house. . . . Nothing is easier, with our unaccentuated tongues, than to fit words to music; and I am convinced that a gifted musician would find prose as convenient to his art as verse, and perhaps more so. I have noticed a hundred times that, under the spell of passion, most melodious and tuneful phrases come to me, because range and modulation are determined by emotion and by the natural compass of the voice, unembarrassed by metre or by rhyme (although I often fell into rhyme). Everything was in perfect harmony with what I felt, key, runs and trills: Nature herself inspired me. I regret now that I did not get my friend Loiseau to note down some of these impromptus as I sang them; they would have been examples of a type of sentimental music of which I have never heard the exact counterpart, although I find something like them in the work of the Chevalier *Gluck* and also in some of *Grétry's* airs, especially those occurring in that bad play *Les Deux Avares*; and his charming song in *Les Deux Jumeaux de Bergame* is absolutely in my manner. [The Jeweller Rigal might remember hearing someone improvising *sotto voce* under his first-floor balcony one wet evening. He was enchanted, and exclaimed over and over again: "Oh, how pretty!" That was in 1774, fifteen years and two months after Zéphire's death. I was just beginning to sing again in the evening as I used to, and for Mme Monclar's girls (Mme Monclar was the third sister of Suadèle and Rosalie). I was not then most attracted by young Amélie of Brabant, but by a blonde with a ravishing complexion, who was established as a milliner in the *Rue du Petit-Lion-Saint-Sauveur* in 1776, at the time when I was being persecuted by Desmarolles after the publication of the *Paysan.* She was *Zéphirette.* . . . Manon Gaudet separated me absolutely from this child during my adventure with *Henriette*; she never had any children of her own, and wanted to give her husband a pleasant illusion by adopting mine. But I never knew the child's identity till long after. Ah, but it was always to Zéphire that I sang; it was still the charm that Zéphire had given to this nightly pastime that, after Zéphirette's disappearance, automatically led me back to it, and made me sing to the elder Mlle Monclar, or to young Amélie of Brussels. . . . Mme Monclar never recognised me. By then she was the mother of eight charming girls and had, besides her regular apprentices, pupils bound for a year – all chosen with the utmost care as we shall see when we come to the years 1774-1780. To her I should have seemed an eccentric, whereas I was merely one who remembered better than others.] To-day, the 25th of Ventôse (15th March, 1794), I have been told that a professional musician can only put verse to music. Then it is a great misfortune to be a professional musician! I quoted Lully's setting of *Le Privilège du Roi.* I was told that this was plain song. Then I quoted my own singing to Zéphirette, refound but as yet unrecognised, and the cries of "Ah, how pretty!" drawn by admiration from the girls and several other listeners. I was answered with insults, but it was not I who was in the wrong.

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*I have observed that all the families of Lower Burgundy which are descended from the Gauls—as was mine on both sides, and the Collets, the Rameaus, the Daugys, the Champeaus, the Dissons, the Tilhiens, the Droins, the Dorés, and so forth—have fair hair in childhood and ash-blond, chestnut or brown after adolescence; and this proves that they are the real aborigines of the country: whereas the Dondènes and the Parangons, with their hair as black as a Jalof's and their sallow, flat, wide, ugly faces, appear to me of Tartar origin. . . .

Another totally unrelated observation occurs to me here concerning the partiality for a slender waist which I share with most Parisians. One only finds it in an extreme form in men who are temperamentally inconstant; or perhaps it produces inconstancy by causing a distaste for pregnancy. A man with this taste, who was sufficiently sensible to want to love his wife always, conceived the idea of finding some pretext for a journey, beginning at the conclusion of the third month and lasting until three months after the lying-in.

But I anticipate: it is as though I were seeking to delay the oncome of terrible and calamitous events by introducing here incidents that happened later. . . . I repeat, this evening pastime was delicious. With Zéphire, Suadèle, Rosalie and Victorine (the third sister) for audience, my inspiration grew and often drew accents from me that touched the heart-strings; more than once I moved the three sisters to that tender emotion which came naturally to my young friend. . . . The other satisfaction I allowed myself was that of writing sweet compliments to Zéphire, without address or mention of her name: I folded my notes fan-wise and their length enabled me to push them through the hole for the window pin. But one evening Florence (Suadèle's fourth sister) happened to see the paper first. Zéphire had left her place to speak to someone and did not hear my signal; and I never thought to wait for hers, certain of an alertness that had never failed. In the meantime Florence had come near the window the better to hear what was being said; the drawn curtain prevented me from recognising her, and with a little frightened movement she took my note. She opened it and read it aloud to her companions (Mme Guisland was not in the room). The style was that of a father talking to his daughter, and everyone approved of it . . . but to whom was it addressed? Was it for Florence who had taken it, or for Suadèle whose place was near the hole, or for Zéphire whose body generally concealed it? They hesitated a little over this last possibility: but who could have written to Zéphire? In the end they gave the note to Victorine (since Mme Monclar), because the tall, handsome lad who was one day to be her husband had already begun to pay court to her, although she was so young. All this was told to me by my young friend, and I resolved in future to write alternatively to her and to the four sisters, letters designed to strengthen their disposition towards integrity, propriety and the other virtues; not praising their beauty save to make them the more respect it; never speaking of love, even to my Zéphire, save to encourage them to distrust a sentiment which is so flattering to the heart in its beginnings, so ruthless when it dominates, and which leaves the soul drained dry when it ends! These letters were at times very happily expressed, and served as a course of moral instruction; for the girls read them aloud when their mistress was absent and reread them in the evening after they had retired for the night. To these letters I always added a private note to Zéphire, which she herself abstracted or which was given to her by Suadèle when it was enclosed in the latter's letter, or which I slipped through the hole while her companions were busy reading the main letter. Thus I had some exquisite moments every day, during which I held personal conversation with Zéphire and her pretty comrades; for every Sunday Zéphire would repeat the comments on my letter, thereby enabling me always to introduce some remark suitable to the character of each girl. I went further: knowing their secret thoughts, I used to play the wizard and claim to divine what each one had imagined about me; I mentioned them by name and repeated some of their remarks, which, I said, I had understood by watching the movements of their lips. . . . It was a most amusing pastime with these ingenuous young girls. . . . Innocent pleasures! I have since tried to recapture you by using the same devices, and if you had not the same charm, at least you suspended for a while the course of my misfortunes. . . .*

*I founded a Comedy upon these two diversions: *La Marchande de Modes.* Women have always been my inspiration. Thus it was Élise, Virginie and Zéphirette who suggested *Le Quadragenaire*; Amélie, the elder Monclar, Victorine, Suzette and Constance (the sister of the elder Monclar's intended) who prompted *La Malédiction Paternelle,* wherein I somewhat romanticise the story of my friends and of my marriage with Henriette, but faithfully quote the Diary of my adventure with Virginie and my rupture with Élise (a wrong since repaired). The same book contains an adventure concerning a girl called *Louise* and one called *Thérèse,* Eighteen months of happiness! The last half of 1757 and the whole of 1758! During this halcyon time I studied hardly at all, but I lived, and enjoyed all that is sweetest in love and friendship. I had been no happier with Mme Parangon; for now I had taken my proper place, as the protector rather than the protected. Certainly I could no longer hold out any hopes to my parents of establishing myself satisfactorily by contracting a marriage which would cover them with joy and honour; on the contrary, I had to conceal how I became acquainted with Zéphire, and her origins, by the use of imaginary names, birthplace, and estate; and for this reason I avoided knowing anything about her, as I preferred to be ignorant myself of what I meant to hide from others. Thus I was happy as are old people, in the prospect of a future which only death could change; my ambitions were limited to the hope of seeing my wife established as a milliner and of a life passed in some sort of comfort. But even this I did not deserve: it would have been too happy a lot for me!

Yet before my all was ravished from me, and so that the loss of it should be more grievous, Loiseau had a conversation with Mme Percy which added greatly to my expectations. I had not yet told my real name to this woman, and the complete change in my features and in the colour of my hair prevented her from recognising a child . . . whom she had loved. But in spite of her profession, such was her tenderness and benevolence towards me that she was like a mother to me; it was difficult to say which was

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but these are not the Louise and Thérèse of 1772, and I repent having profaned their names; they are the ones who had already figured in *Les Nouveaux Mémoires d'un Homme de Qualité.* The Louise and Thérèse whom I revere I introduced subsequently into my *Nuits de Paris.* Mlles Londeau, Parizot, Laurens and Poinot, were my Muses for *Le Nouvel Abeillard*; Mme de Montalembert inspired *Nuits de Paris*; and all the women I have ever known are gathered together in the sixty-five Volumes of *Les Contemporaines.*

dearer to her, Zéphire or I, and every day it was obvious how she adored her Zéphire. Then why had she prostituted her? Because she had no principles, and wanted to make her wealthy through a profession which she herself had only adopted late in life and had rarely practised in person, so that she had no experience of its dangers. Later she had repented of her action; and when I began to visit Zéphire and she saw that I was a man of good character, she was on my side at once; and in apprenticing Zéphire to millinery, we were fulfilling her mother's wishes without being aware of it. . . . To return, Mme Percy told Loiseau one day that she had an annuity of about six thousand livres, and proposed to endow her daughter to the same amount. (But, in every way unfortunate, she invested the money in the name of her beloved daughter only; she did not confess this until Zéphire was at the point of death). . . . Thus I had the comforting prospect of a fortune as large as any I had ever expected, though from a source that shamed me; and it was assured to me through Zéphire whom I would have taken without a rag to her back, so much did I adore her, and with the certainty of being in extremest poverty for the rest of my days. Loiseau and I talked a great deal about this matter. He maintained that Zéphire could legitimately accept her mother's gift in spite of its origin, since the first duty of a mother is to dower her daughter, and this duty is so sacred that it swamps every other consideration – not as regards the mother, who should not use any but right and honest means to fulfil it, but from the point of view of the daughter, who was, furthermore, in duty bound to shut her eyes to her mother's conduct, and could therefore respectfully receive the maternal gift. Moreover Zéphire was free to assume that her money was legitimately come by (and this as a matter of fact was the case) as it was possible that her mother, before entering her present deplorable profession, had saved it by her personal economy and in her business as a pawnbroker, which she practised under police inspection. That is how Loiseau tried to set my conscience at rest; and he was successful, as I had the greatest confidence in him. Moreover he made enquiries and found that Zéphire's mother conducted her business as a pawnbroker with an integrity which well merited that protection which the police equally extended to her in her other trade, on account of the prudence with which she managed it. She, in fact, gave me the first idea for my *Pornographe*, and it is quite certain that if there were more procuresses like Mme Percy, nothing would be easier than to bring about a salutary reform by making use of them as I suggest in the first volume of that work: *Idées Singulières.*

I have said that I was faithful to Zéphire, but this statement, which is true as far as her companions were concerned, might lead to error. I must confess everything if I do not want to be misleading. We come then to a disgraceful episode, which is the more astonishing as it occurred during a period of virtue and seemed to spring from nowhere, like a terrible storm in the midst of calm weather or a frightful dream in a sweet and peaceful night. . . . I was respecting my promise and abstaining from other women; I was leading a better life than I had ever done yet and was beginning to imagine that this might become a habit. But I was to illustrate the danger of such books as *Le Portier des Chartreux*, *Thérèse philosophe*, *La Religieuse en chemise*, and the like, by the sudden access of terrible eroticism they produced in me after prolonged continence. . . . Molet, a licentious fellow whom I have already mentioned as a former friend of Mandrin and my fellow-boarder at Bonne Sellier's, came to see me one Sunday morning while I was still in bed, and brought me the first mentioned of these books, which I had just glanced at in La Macé's house. Eager, ardent and full of curiosity, I took it from him with delight and began to read it in bed; I forgot everything, even Zéphire, and, by the time I had read twenty pages, I was on fire. Then *Manon Lavergne* called to bring back my linen and Loiseau's from her cousin Bonne Sellier, my former hostess, who still washed for us. She was a little dressmaker of the Rue Notre Dame, whose acquaintance I had made when I was seeing something of Rose Vignon; her window was next to our printing-room window, and I used to talk across to her. After my adventure with her in her mother's house (for details of which I refer my readers to *Le Drame de la Vie*)* I knew how she behaved with the brothers of her mother's apprentices. I threw myself upon her, and met with little resistance. . . .

After she had left I continued my book. . . . Half an hour later, Cécile Decoussy called on behalf of my sister Margot, to ask why I never went to see her now. Without any regard for this young blonde's position (she was going to be married shortly) nor for the atrocious betrayal of my sister in the person of her friend and fellow-worker, I attacked her with such fury that she was as much terrified as surprised, thinking that I was a raving madman. She tried to melt me by throwing herself at my feet; then yielded . . . and I returned to the calamitous book.

About three-quarters of an hour later, Thérèse Courbuisson arrived, laughing and playful: "Where is the lazy fellow? What, still in bed!" And she ran up to tickle me. I watched my chance, and caught her, like a floating feather, almost in mid-air and, in a single movement, had her under me. "Oh, oh! And after what you have just done to Manon! You're a pretty fellow!" She was taken before the words were out of her mouth, and, as she was extremely responsive physically, her efforts were turned to helping me. . . . At last she heard my landlord coming upstairs and tore herself from my arms. She went out, leaving the door open, and I finished my book.

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*See pp. 999-1003.

The bed had heated me, and these three explosions had only exacerbated my senses; also the violence I had used had increased the ferment of my passions. I got up, resolved to fetch Zéphire and bring her to my room, there to satisfy my erotic fury upon her. . . . At this moment someone tapped at my door, which I had not shut. I started, thinking it was Zéphire. "Who is there?" I exclaimed. "Come in." "Séraphine," answered a voice I thought I recognised. I trembled, thinking it was Séraphine Destroches, come to reproach me for what I had done to her friend Decoussy. "Who is it?" I repeated. "Séraphine Jolon." The only person I knew of this name was housekeeper to a painter who had been our neighbour in the *Rue des Poulies*; I had paid her tender compliments on one or two occasions; but then Largeville came into my life, and afterwards Jeannette Demailly, and I had left the house. Reassured, I opened the door. . . . It was she. "I was sent to you by Mlle Fagard (now Mme Jolon and my sister-in-law), in hopes that you will introduce me, with a personal recommendation, to Mlle Delaporte, who thinks very highly of you and could do me a great service." "This very minute," I answered. "Sit down, pretty neighbour." She was charming! As she turned to sit down she displayed a perfect waist. . . . I seized her, and threw her on the bed. She struggled, but it was as oil to fire. . . . I did not even take the time to shut my door. I finished; I began again. . . . "I . . . did . . . not . . . tell you . . . that . . . my sister Jolon . . . is waiting for me," gasped Séraphine. This only stimulated me afresh and I was beginning a third attack (I was like a madman) when the door opened. . . . It was Fagard, and, oh, so beautiful! . . . "Help, help!" cried Séraphine, exhausted. I left her all exposed, rushed to the door, kicked it to, and tumbled the provocative brunette, more astonished than submissive, on to my couch, and there she endured my sixth assault, which was as vigorous as my first, sustained as I was by my heated imagination, more efficacious than any aphrodisiac. Agathe Fagard had not yet recovered from her surprise, before, exhausted by this three-fold and almost simultaneous effort, I was blushing for my madness, and apologising to the sisters-in-law. "It had to be seen to be believed!" exclaimed Séraphine. I used all my logic to calm them, but had some difficulty in doing so. I took them to see Zoé, and spoke of Séraphine with such enthusiasm that she agreed to use all her influence over the painter to get him to do what the girl wanted. . . .

Such was the effect of my erotic reading. But I know a book more dangerous than any I have mentioned, for it stimulates to cruelty: that *Justine*, which Danton used to read to excite himself.*

That day I was ashamed and abashed in Zéphire's presence, and she asked me several times what was the matter. . . . Next day I met Thérèse with little Berthé, and she said to me: "You're a pretty sort of fellow!" "Ah, if you knew everything," I answered, "what would you think of me then?" "Oh, we know what to think of you," answered Pèlerine, "and we know all about your parties on Sundays and holidays. . . . They are beautiful, and on so noble a key. . . ." "Get along with you," said Thérèse, "the tunes he sings them are more important than the key!" And my two little neighbours went on their way laughing. . . . But the detestable outburst which I have just described got me into trouble with Séraphine and Madelon Destroches, and with Fagard and Mlle Jolon

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*It is by the villainous De Sade, of the *Nuits*.

(who later married the painter), and with the whole Lavergne family, Bonne Sellier excepted. This five-fold adventure and its consequences gave me a horror of licentious books; I avoided them like the plague, and lived in accordance with my principles.

The end of June came and, save for this incident, I was happy with Zéphire; that is to say, I was virtuous. We continued our picnics all through the summer and for a part of autumn. That was the end of my happiness; there it finished, and finished for ever – save perhaps for a fleeting gleam in 1772. . . .

Towards the end of December, a year to the day after my walk with Zéphire on the Quai des Orfèvres, we had a day of sunshine as beautiful as rare at that time of year. It was as though Nature willed me to celebrate this happy anniversary, so after dinner I went out alone and walked to the Champs Élysées. I had urgent work in hand, and at every step I said to myself: *"I must go back!"* I had in fact just turned back, when two young men, apparently of some rank, accosted me, I know not why. Deep in my "commemoration," I did not understand what they said, and signed them to leave me alone. "What an odd creature!" said one to the other. The epithet hurt me (Loiseau had made me something of a republican)* and I cast them a black look. One of them came up to me, and said: "Is Monsieur annoyed?" "Yes and no," and I passed on. "If Monsieur is annoyed, perhaps I can distract him; if he is not, he must have reasons for his behaviour." These remarks displeased me: "At the moment I am annoyed." "And when Monsieur is annoyed, how does he show it?" he asked, at the same time touching my lips with the end of his cane which was covered with mud. I struck him with such force that I knocked him

*This was written in 1783, six years before the Revolution.

down. . . . In these distressful times no one ever went out unarmed. I, however, had come without a sword, not thinking for a moment that I should go so far! The man's friend ran at me sword in hand. I avoided him. A pole was lying on the ground a little way off, and this I seized and defended myself with it while retreating towards *Chaillot.* Then two valets came to the attack, but I was quicker than they. I dodged these liveried clowns, who were embarrassed by their high boots, and had the satisfaction of delivering a dozen hard blows on their massive shoulders, an achievement which, to my great astonishment, made both the man I had knocked down and his avenger burst out laughing. I was as agile as a young deer in his first rut. . . . Unfortunately the mounted police happened to pass along the main road; they galloped towards us and, at a sign from my two molesters, arrested me. . . . (Here I must pause for a moment. What a country, in which two young upper class puppies, and the aggressors at that, had power to oppress a man who had only asked to be left alone! How I hate these insolent nobles, who, having been born into families at some time meritorious or powerful, use this frivolous advantage to crush a useful man, worth far more than they are! I was a workman, and my intrinsic value was higher than that of such a duke as *Fronsac.*)* I was imprisoned in Chaillot; but I did not want my family

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*This was written in 1784. I would not say the same thing to-day, the 15th of August, 1790, and to-day, the 18th of March, 1795, I would add the remark on the cruelty of the Jacobins which will be found on the following page. What then is the conclusion? That all tyranny is intolerable, and the tyranny of the *Sans-Culottes* even more so than that of princes. For princes do not oppress everyone, because they do not know everyone; whereas the innumerable tyrants of the Sans-Culottes are everywhere. They are malicious, jealous of their equals, drunk with the power to oppress which they think can never be carried far enough, insolent and unjust as are all ignorant and illiterate people, and cruel with the cruelty of prolonged and degrading servitude.

name to appear in a jail book, so I said nothing. My enemies lodged their charge clearly. I heard them addressed as *Monseigneur*, and later recognised their livery as that of Orleans. However, I was allowed to write, and it was to Zéphire, not to Loiseau, that I wrote. . . . A messenger delivered my letter and within an hour my little friend arrived, bathed in perspiration, for she had run all the way. She had left in the absence of her mistress without a word to anyone, fearing lest even Suadèle might detain her. . . . "Ah, brother!" she exclaimed, throwing herself into my arms. My two enemies were still present. "Is he your brother?" asked the one whom I had struck. "Ah, Monsieur, what has he done?" They looked at her weeping face; she fainted. I succoured her and she came back to herself. My two enemies were touched (they were *princes*, and hard though they may be, they are less so than a Jacobin tribunal!); they tore up their charge, restored me to liberty, and said to Zéphire: "There, take your brother. We give him back to you for your sake." They paid all that had to be paid, for I had no money, and set me free. "She is adorable!" they said to each other. How mortified I was to be thus at the mercy of two strangers' whim, who were neither kings nor magistrates! We left at the fall of day. Zéphire could scarcely walk, and I was obliged to carry her for part of the way. At the Tuileries we took a cab; she was still pale and trembling, and I sent her to bed directly we got home. . . . O God, the wound will never heal!

By the morrow there was no hope! . . . But this was kept from me. When Zéphire received my letter she was in that condition which makes a shock so dangerous to her sex; and the result was a "suppression." At the same time she succumbed to pleurisy, caused by her swooning while in a heavy perspiration. . . . Forgive these details. Surely they are permissible in a man whose last chance of happiness is slipping from him! . . .

Men can never be reminded too often how carefully these frail and charming beings, on whom our peace and happiness depend, must be protected at those times when a shock may prove fatal to them.

I passed a troubled night, and attributed this to my mental agitation of the day. At mid-day I went to see Zéphire. She was prostrate and suffering. I thought that she needed to be reassured as to my own mental state and tried to appear cheerful. She kissed me twice, and then begged me to leave her to rest. A gloomy silence reigned in the shop, and Suadèle turned away to hide her tears. I called on Zoé, to ask her to visit my young friend. She had done so already, and was going to watch over her that night, but she did not tell me this. . . . I went to work. . . . One of my colleagues said: "How pale you are! What is the matter?" Loiseau answered on my behalf: "He overtired himself yesterday, during the afternoon." No more was said. . . . I worked, but my arms were heavy; and a secret anxiety kept Zéphire always present with me.

At eight o'clock, Loiseau said: "Come and eat something and then go and rest. You really are pale. Mlle Zoé and I will go to see Zéphire. Your appearance would only make her anxious." "She need not see me; but let me see her!" I answered. "Very well," he said. We had supper before setting out. Zoé was already with Zéphire when we arrived. Apparently they told the invalid that I was outside, for she smiled while speaking to them. I went away satisfied, and owe a good night's sleep to her . . . whom I had killed. . . .

When I awoke next morning, I was conscious of a mortal anxiety. I hurried to Loiseau's lodgings, but he was not there. He had passed the night with Zéphire, Zoé, Suadèle, Rosalie and Victorine. So critical was her state that they had been afraid that she would not reach the third day.

I thought that he was at work; and as it seemed too early to call on Mme Guisland, I went to work myself. Loiseau had only just arrived. He looked sad, and was flushed as though devoured by some internal fire. He came up to me and his way of speaking, which was always of a gracious sweetness, was even gentler than usual. He set to work without telling me anything that might disturb me. And indeed I was afraid to question him. However I asked at last: "How did you leave her?" "Loving you with all her heart." "My dear child! . . . And her chest?" "She is in great pain." "And I am the cause of it. . . ." I fell silent.

At nine o'clock I said to Loiseau: "I should like to see her for a few moments." "No, no; at midday." I went on working. . . . At midday, after having taken a bite with my friend, I put on my coat. But Loiseau, I know not how, managed to persuade me to put off my visit until the evening, though he himself had been three times to see the invalid without my having noticed it. Each time he hoped to hear that she had taken the turn. By six o'clock there was absolutely no hope. At seven she received the Sacraments of the Church. At eight I insisted on seeing my friend; but Loiseau protested that he could not eat without me, and thus managed to make me swallow something first. Still he knew that he could not keep me away any longer, and so, with infinite delicacy, told me the position. I was stunned. . . . I could not move. Tears came to my eyes, but I was dumb. "Come and see her," said Loiseau firmly. And we went.

I found my poor friend in a state of complete prostration. She was suffocating. Yet she smiled when she saw me, and took my hand, saying: "It is nothing." I believed her. . . . (Ah, how my tears flow! . . . I cannot see what I write. . . . My heart chokes me as it did at that fatal moment!) . . . I kissed her, and she smiled again. They brought her something that she had to take. I fed her, and so she took it almost eagerly. I said that I would not leave her, and was allowed to stay because the doctor came while I was there, and said it was the last chance. Only Zoé sat up with me; Zéphire, with an imperative gesture, sent Suadèle to bed. When we were alone, we three, my little friend asked me to lay her head upon my heart, saying that she would breathe more easily so. . . . I bared my breast and put it there. . . . She seemed to sleep, but perhaps she was unconscious. So tender was her love for me that her heart was too full to be aware of pain. I remained motionless, fearing to make the slightest movement. Towards three o'clock we tried to make her take something. She could not swallow. Then Zoé, realising that she was in the throes, kissed me affectionately and tried to make me lay her head upon the pillow. "No, no," I answered quickly. Zéphire looked at me. . . . It was for the last time! . . . She kissed my hand, and I pressed my lips to her pale lips. . . . She uttered a profound sigh . . . which I received. . . . It was her soul. . . . She gave me all of it. . . . I thought that she was more at ease and less in pain; only Zoé . . . saw Death . . . terrible Death! . . . come to take away his victim. . . . She kissed me again (it was four o'clock) and implored me to return to my bed for the rest of the night, assuring me that I was only in her way. "Lay her head gently down, dear friend," she added. "I fear . . . it is necessary. . . ." At last I obeyed, and laid Zéphire's head with infinite precautions, upon the pillow . . . vain care, alas! . . . and sat down opposite to her, ready to fly to her at the slightest sign . . . that she would never make. . . . Zoé covered her up in such a way that I could no longer see her face. I complained. "Listen," she said. "I want to talk to you, but not in this room." I went out. "Go and rest," she whispered. "*She* asked me to send you away earlier. You are in the way . . . and you must rest . . . and . . . it will please her to hear that you have slept . . . when you come back. . . . If she wakes up I will say . . . that you are resting. . . ." At the words: *I will say,* her tears, in spite of herself, burst forth like two fountains. I refused to go. Then she implored me most tenderly. "Go, dear friend. . . . And tell Monsieur Loiseau what I have said to you: that you must rest, and that he is to come. . . . Tell him that . . . word for word . . . *that he is to come.*" I kissed her hand, saying: "O healing hand, heal my Zéphire, and comfort my poor . . . my poor heart!" And I left her unaware of my loss. . . . Alas, I have never recovered . . . what I lost that day . . . Zéphire had filled the place of all that I had lost, but no one could fill her place; from that day I was doomed . . . for ever doomed. . . .

On the way I was taken with a desire to sing some sad and tender air that would release my tears. Pierre Rameau (of Sacy) had written a Complaint upon the misfortunes of his younger brother Edmond and of his sister, the fair Ursule, which I inserted later, without correction, at the end of the *Paysan-Paysanne pervertis*:

> *The unhappy fate of his sister leaves Edmond's heart untouched; the profligate Aurore has stolen that heart from Zéphire—from generous Zéphire who succoured him in his misfortunes, and was all virtuous in the breast of vice. Ursule has changed through her.*
>
> *This loving Samaritan was a mirror to Ursule: her fellow victim broke the chain that bound her to despair. "Ah, now I see," said the poor girl, "that God can pardon me, since he chooses to lead me back to him through one as lost as myself!"*

I wept as I sang these verses. . . . Afterwards I reflected: "How did Zéphire's mother come to give her that name? Had she heard this Complaint and the story of Ursule? I must find out." Reflection is the northwest wind of the soul; it dries up tears, and I was almost serene when I reached Loiseau. He was already dressed. I told him word for word what Zoé had said. . . . He turned pale . . . sat down . . . covered his face with his hands . . . got up quickly and embraced me, saying: "Let us go and work for two or three hours. . . . You could not rest; you are too much agitated." I was surprised at these words from so humane a man, and one who usually coddled me like a child. I went to work. . . . One, two, three hours passed by. Loiseau was absent a moment without my noticing it. . . . Finally he said: "Let us work till midday." "Oh no! It makes my little friend happy to have me there. I will run. . . . I shall be back in a moment if she is asleep." There was no way of stopping me . . . so Loiseau said: "Let us at least finish this. They are waiting for it, and afterwards we will go together." I yielded; but his whole behaviour puzzled me; I did not recognise him. . . . We finished. I noticed that before we left Loiseau put away composing sticks, copy-holders, and copy; in fact the whole of our *Saint-Jean*, but I thought this was just his usual carefulness. When we got into the Rue Saint-André he made me go by the longest way; he put his arm round my shoulders, but, though his tears were flowing, he said nothing. . . . "But we are not getting any nearer," I said. "The road is never too long for a condemned man going to the scaffold!" "What? What does that mean?" "That we have both reached the acme of misfortune! You by way of love . . . and I by way of friendship." "Zéphire is dead! . . . Oh, unhappy that I am, and I left her!" "She died in your arms. . . . You took her last sigh. . . . When you left her this morning . . . the veil of eternity was over her. . . ." "Great God!" I exclaimed in a terrible voice. They were the only words I uttered. . . . We stood in mournful silence, for I was incapable of movement. . . . Loiseau made me sit down on a stone bench in front of the house in the *Rue Pavée* where *Berquin* lived afterwards. I sat there for a few moments. Loiseau was weeping, but my eyes were fixed and dry. . . . All at once I got up and began running. In an instant I was at Mme Guisland's house. . . . I ran up to the first floor; every window was open; Suadèle and Zoé were weeping over the naked body of Zéphire. I flung myself on those dear remains, and pressed my mouth to her already frozen lips! . . . "Do not bury her!" I cried. "She is not dead, she is still breathing." I pressed her to my heart . . . she was stiff and cold. . . . Loiseau came in. "She shall not be buried, my friend," he said to me. "Rest assured of that. She shall lie upon this bed, and, at the least movement, a surgeon or doctor shall be fetched." (He was trying to control my imagination.) "Cover her up, Mademoiselle," he said to Zoé. . . . They covered her up, creating an illusion that was necessary to me, and which lasted until the following day. . . . Or rather, delirium had set in; for in the full possession of my senses I could not have been tricked. I stared at them half crying, like a child waiting to be reassured by those in whom he trusts. . . .

Owing to the nature of Zéphire's illness, putrefaction set in quickly, and when I came to see her again, a little earlier than they had expected, the body was being carried away to its last resting place. . . . No more illusion in that dreadful moment! . . . I felt all my loss and loneliness as I watched the coffin vanish in the distance! . . . God! To what a point can wretched mortals suffer! Dreadful suicide had no terrors for my tortured imagination! I thought of death with that pleased longing which should only pertain to life, and felt that the end of this too painful existence would be felicity. . . . I thirsted for death! . . . I watched the body on its way with no pity for my Zéphire; she did not suffer; I envied her. It was for myself that I grieved . . . that I wept . . . myself that I pitied. . . . That is the crown of sorrow. . . . It is despair! . . . I exclaimed, in lamentable tones: "Zéphire! . . . dear Zéphire! Soul of my soul! I will follow you! . . . I am going to die, and gladly! . . ." This thought comforted me. . . . (Despair herself was my comforter!) . . . I followed at a distance, my eyes fixed on the coffin. Zéphire had not left me yet: her progress to the grave did not hurt me most; it was in that moment when the earth covered her and I could no longer see her . . . that I felt the full force of my anguish! . . . I rose (I had been kneeling) and glanced about me. . . . My eyes saw no one. . . . The universe was a desert, and living beings, insentient plants. . . . "It is time to go and die," I thought. I do not know why I did not run and throw myself into the river; perhaps it seemed an unworthy end. . . . I went to Loiseau. I entered his room where he was waiting in great anxiety, not knowing what had become of me; for it had never occurred to him that I had been a silent witness of the funeral, which had been put earlier on purpose that I should not be present. I did not speak to him, but kneeling in front of his chest, I turned the key and opened it, and rummaged among the contents until I found two loaded pistols at the bottom, which Loiseau had brought from *La Puisaye* and which his natural orderliness and caution made him keep always ready for use. I did not find them as quickly as would a calmer man, and Loiseau was in time to see me grasp the fatal weapon. . . . He snatched it from me, slammed down the lid of the box, locked it and took away the key and hid it. . . . Frenziedly I shouted: "The pistols, the pistols!" I had lost my senses . . . and that was what saved me. . . . Loiseau held me, and sent a message to my landlord, a big, vigorous Burgundian, who took me away bound. Loiseau followed. He wrote to my three friends, Renaud, Boudard and Gaudet, and they nursed me in turns. There were always a man and a woman in my room, but it was Zoé and

Loiseau who watched by me at night, and they had scarcely any rest by day. . . . The first words I uttered were these: *Now I have utterly lost Madame Parangon!* . . . Loiseau applauded this remark, and recounted to Zoé all the virtues of that lady and how much she had done for me! . . . His eulogy softened my grief and distracted my mind; it saved my life! . . . "Ah!" exclaimed Zoé, "how rightly you called him a privileged being! What women! . . . Yet he must have deserved their love. . . ." This delicate commendation pleased my heart, which nothing now could please. . . .

I lay for a long time at death's door, and it needed all the nursing I received to bring me back to life. Loiseau and Zoé were my divine saviours. . . . Oh, how they cared for me! How wisely Zoé would sometimes release my tears and sometimes dry them! . . . With what tact and kindness she used to talk of Zéphire! How she charmed my grief, melting it into sweet tenderness by her praises of one whom she kept always present with me by talking about her! Oh, oh! I cannot restrain my tears! What if I had known then that Zéphire was to be the last woman who truly loved me!*

See me, dear Reader, see me at last and finally alone! . . . Look pitifully on this poor wretch, against whom the gates of happiness are for ever shut! Who is never again to know a woman who does not betray him, or who is not insensible! You will see him tricked and duped; still weak at

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*I have been loved since by *Rose Bourgeois*; but she had no time to get to know me save through letters, although, in 1765-66, she restored all the energy I had lost for so long a time! . . . Whenever I pass her worthy father's house at the corner of the *Rue de la Traversière* and the *Rue Honoré*, I exclaim: *Salve, O domus! quae me fecisti auctorem!* . . . Also *Élise* loved me, but only as an author; also *Louise* and *Thérèse*, but the former loved me as a man of honour, and the latter as a friend. Zéphire was the last in whose heart I implanted love. . . . For I do not count a certain *Mme Hollier*, a watchmaker's wife in the Place Dauphine, or *Claudon Roullot*, or *Adelaïde Nécard*, or *Désirée*, or Mme *Saniez*, or the *Marquise de M.* who was so dear to me.

times, just because his tender heart has experienced all the delights of love. He still hopes for them long after time and reason should have healed his wound! . . . But for him there will never be another Jeannette Rousseau, nor Marie-Jeanne, nor Mme Parangon, nor Madelon Baron, nor Colombe, nor Marianne Tangis, nor Zéphire! Zéphire, whom Heaven had expressly reserved to give him happiness by the rarest and most extraordinary means, whom he lost, alas, at a time when he was on the point of discovering something concerning her which would have changed the kind of his happiness without destroying it! He lost her through his own imprudence. . . . But how unrelated was this imprudence to her, and by what a fatal chance was she dragged into it! . . .

When I was on the road to convalescence, my softened grief made me weep continually. I went down Zéphire's street the first time I could go out; and the sight of it clutched at my heart so that it contracted in my breast; then the tears came, and I felt my heart open to receive my sorrow. For a little while I could do nothing but weep; but as the pain abated I made the Rue de Savoy ring with the name of Zéphire. The most lamentable and heartrending accents issued from my breast; I mourned for Zéphire, and sang:

> *Dear Zéphire, Zéphire whom I adore, once more I raise my cypress-covered lyre to sing your praise! . . . Immortal and enduring love enters my heart to consecrate its grief for your so bitterly lamented end!*

Time flew. My grief was no less intense, but it changed into a tender sadness, and I loved to feel it. I was proud of having been loved by Zéphire, and my mind exalted her more and more as the weeks removed her from me.

The first time I went out I learned, from the notices of sales, that Mlle

Guéant was dead. I was shocked! But it was only long after that I learned the part I had innocently played in her death, which was the result of being brought to bed, and this originated in that hour of darkness in the Hotel de Hollande. "I shall leave Paris with less regret, now that everything which made it attractive to me has disappeared," I thought.

Directly I was somewhat more in possession of myself, I turned my mind to Manon's marriage with Gaudet, and mentioned this to Loiseau as the thing which would most console me. "Such a marriage demands serious reflection, my friend," he answered. "I will speak about it to your old comrade, but I do not think it would be right to press him. . . ." I had no answer to make, for I knew that Loiseau was right; but the first time I saw Gaudet I could not help saying how deeply I was interested in Manon. He made some insignificant reply. A week passed, and the next week came. I felt a little better. I called on Manon and went with her to pay my first visit to her aunt. The latter was enchanted to see me, for Manon had spoken with me almost every day until this last fortnight, so she knew my state of mind and had sung my praises to her aunt. Zéphire's mother threw herself upon my neck, and called me her dear child. It was on this occasion that she revealed the fact that she had lost almost all her money through her daughter's death, as most of it had been invested in her name. Later they told me that Manon and Gaudet were to be married on the following Tuesday; from the moment that Gaudet knew it was my wish, he had protested that the marriage was his own dearest desire. They asked me to pretend to know nothing about it, as Gaudet was looking forward to giving me a pleasant surprise. He came in just as Manon had finished telling me this.

"Well, my dear fellow," he said, "shall I take the necessary steps? Do you think I shall get my father's consent?" I pressed his hand and, unable to hold my tongue, exclaimed: "I know everything!" "Splendid," he answered. "But you should have remembered what I said to you one day: form a sect with yourself as leader, and I will be your first apostle. . . . That shows my devotion to you. Besides, I love Manon with all my heart, for her own sake and for Zéphire's. . . ." (They signed him to silence.) "Oh, I understand my friend! You leave me to talk about what is dearest to him, even if it hurts him! Nicolas would rather I rescued his sweet Zéphire from the oblivion of the grave than left her there! He has none of that false delicacy which buries the dead twice over. . . ." I threw myself into Gaudet's arms; I had never heard him speak so philosophically. "Dear friend," I exclaimed, "you are not unworthy of Loiseau, Renaud and Boudard, for you have just spoken as they would. Dear Manon, you will have a good husband, if you can hold him. . . . You need not be afraid that he will ever reproach you, or behave badly to you, for that is foreign to his nature; but lend yourself to all his physical caprices, for he is sensual. I can say this frankly to you, dear cousin, because you know that I am not usually free of speech, and that all I want is for you and my friend to be happy. . . . O Gaudet, my old comrade! Just now I scarcely know whether you are not dearer to my heart than Loiseau! You are certainly as dear, and you know that I love both of you better than myself!"

We agreed that, for the wedding day, we would invite all our friends – that is to say, Loiseau, Zoé and Renaud; Mme Deschamps and her husband; the former's brother and little Rosalie, his betrothed; Mme Werkawin, Boudard and Mlle Mentelle, together with myself and young Suadèle (if her mother would consent) – to celebrate the occasion in the same place where we had picnicked on the day of *Hi, there, Monsieur l'Abbé!* I told

Loiseau our plan on my return, as he always carried out whatever I proposed. That man . . . he was to me what no prince ever had among his people; he made a powerful king of me; he loved me more than himself; he gave me excellent advice and, if I desired anything, he staked his own happiness to get it for me. . . . Not yet had I lost everything! . . . This noble friend was no less surprised than myself at the thought which Gaudet had so forcibly expressed, for until that moment we had never heard him utter anything but gross obscenities. "He has a mind after all," said Loiseau, "and I am delighted. For we both like him, for the sake of a certain kindliness of character which makes him a useful if not an agreeable companion."

All arrangements were completed, and Gaudet and Manon were married at *Saint-Eustache* at about six o'clock in the morning, with Loiseau, Renaud, Boudard, Deschamps, and myself as witnesses. We all had to sign the register, and there M. Deschamps saw the name *Restif* for the first time. Then each of us went home to get ready for the afternoon. We were to meet the ladies at mid-day for a light lunch, with coffee and chocolate, etc., and then proceed to our destination. It was more of a commemoration than a wedding.

At the hour agreed, we met at the bridegroom's apartment in the *Rue des Lombards*. We found the bride and groom delightfully dressed for the occasion, and Zéphire's mother was with them. We took a carriage as far as the Ménilmontant barrier, where we got out and continued on foot to our lonely spot. There, through Loiseau's forethought, we found a tent and stove, chairs and a table ; but the ladies were disappointed that the weather made it impossible for them to sit on the grass as on the first occasion. We took the same places as on the day of the *Hi there!*, with

Suadèle in Zéphire's place. Deep silence reigned after we were settled. We sat with lowered eyes; Zoé sighed, tears were running down my cheeks, and Zéphire's five friends could not forbear from weeping with me. Even Gaudet was moved, and M. Deschamps and his wife's brother shared in our grief. Zéphire's mother was openly sobbing. Then Loiseau, his face scored with tears, lifted up his voice: "My dear friends of both sexes, gathered here to celebrate the marriage of our good friends Monsieur Gaudet and Mademoiselle Manon, your tears manifest the excellence of your hearts! You weep for the one whom we have lost before you rejoice with those who are left to us. You are giving a just tribute of tears and of regret to beauty and merit, to the masterpiece of every pleasant and solid virtue; and so you comfort him whom she has left a widower, or at least lend sweetness to that pain which his friend's happiness must too vividly recall. O Zéphire, Zéphire, Zéphire! . . . Amiable Zéphire, whom we all adored, three times we summon you, and offer up to you the first fruits of this meal which your presence would have rendered exquisite. Artless and touching heart, your loss is irreparable, I feel it, and my friend's happiness is destroyed for ever; or, if he is ever happy again, it will be in recalling that you loved him! . . . Blessed be thou, O Zéphire! Blessed be your memory, and may it be immortal! Amen! . . ."

He was silent. I was sobbing; everyone was weeping. But it was Suadèle who touched me most; she was suffocating with emotion so that we were obliged to unlace her. Loiseau asked her to forgive him for having revived her grief. "Ah," she exclaimed, "make it yet more keen! I cannot feel the loss of my friend too intensely!" Zéphire's mother embraced me, saying: "I did not deserve to see my child happy!" Then Gaudet addressed me: "Dear friend and leader, you are right to weep, but I am also right to comfort you. Smile once upon my happiness; I will repay you to-morrow and all my life by sharing your regrets!" "That lad never used to think!" whispered Renaud to Mme Deschamps. "A strong and delicate understanding has developed in him. . . ." Loiseau at once assumed a cheerful countenance: "How friend Nicolas would have loved her! . . ." he said, and then added: "Let us give our friends their due; tears for the afflicted, joy for the fortunate; for we must share the unhappiness of the one and the happiness of the other!" Zoé supported him, and Boudard, Mlle Mentelle and all the guests did the same. Gaiety reigned once more, save in three hearts: mine, Suadèle's, and Mme Percy's; but Suadèle and I were outwardly serene. Conversation grew lively as we ate; from time to time Gaudet displayed intelligence, gleams which like lightning shone the brighter for the darkness from which they issued.

Towards the end of the meal I fell into a sad abstraction, and M. Deschamps addressed me, saying: "Monsieur Restif, I cannot blame you; yet it seems to me that Zéphire's charming friend . . ." "*Monsieur Restif*!" exclaimed the mother of my so much lamented dear (it was the first time that my real name had been uttered in her presence). "Are you a Monsieur Restif? Where do you come from?" "From Sacy." "Sacy!" "Certainly," I answered. "Are you that Monsieur Nicolas who used to run away when the girls chased you for a kiss?" "I am." "I would never have recognised you! How your face has changed! . . ." "Did you know me as a child?" "Do you remember Nannette the reaper, who worked for M. Rameau, and . . . a mule stable, . . . where, one day . . ." "I remember, as though I were there now." "And do you not recognise Nannette?" I looked at her; a veil fell from my eyes. "You are Nannette!" I exclaimed. "I am. . . . O Monsieur Nicolas . . . what will you say? . . . I ask the company's permission to take you apart. . . ." I followed her still with no suspicion. . . . "I protest before God," said Nannette, raising her hand to Heaven, "that I knew no other man after what happened in the mule stable (I have no interest in concealing this now). To my great amazement I became pregnant and fled to Paris, as I neither could nor should tell the truth. I bore a child, and that child was Zéphire" "O God!" That was all I could say; my strength failed, and Nannette had to support me; Loiseau and my other friends flew to my help. I do not know what happened. Fortunately I had eaten little, and their cares brought me to myself. . . . "What a day!" exclaimed young Suadèle. "And yet I would not have missed it! . . ." Loiseau did not know whether he ought to question Nannette or hold his tongue, but what he had just seen surprised him strangely. . . . When I had completely recovered my senses I knelt down, though for some years I had thought little of religion, and prayed earnestly. Then Loiseau, most devout of men although a Deist, exclaimed: "Let us pray with him, my friends; for he is asking some great thing of the Supreme Being!" (Let fools laugh if they will; I describe things as they are; I portray Nature herself. I tell what happened, and let contemptuous philosophers and unprincipled puppies turn my story to ridicule and talk of cant if they like; I am indifferent. My business is to record, and such is the heart of man when he is not surfeited with false philosophy.) Everyone without exception knelt down, and Gaudet, the impious blaspheming Gaudet, prayed as fervently as any. At last I rose, and took Nannette's hand without speaking. . . . I looked from face to face, and then I said: "Zéphire was my daughter!"

At these words all the ladies exclaimed: "Ah, God!" Then there was a silence, which was at last broken by Loiseau: "But how is that possible, my friend? Zéphire was fifteen!" "She was only fourteen," answered her mother, "though she looked fifteen or sixteen." "I still cannot understand," said Loiseau, "though I would like to. . ." Then Nannette asked my permission to tell the story of what happened in M. Rameau's mule stable in 1744. I nodded, and she related how Madelon Rameau had incited her to chase me, by telling her that I was very shy and always ran away from girls; how she had caught me in the mule stable and kissed me and how, instead of resisting as she had expected, I had returned her caresses; how, excited by this and by my beauty, she had fallen . . . into such an amorous frenzy . . . that she had . . . tried to satisfy it . . . and I had seconded her; and how, at the very moment when she least expected it considering my youth, I had uttered a deep sigh and fainted. . . . At this moment (she continued) our bodies were utterly united. I fell at her side as though dead and, thoroughly frightened, she threw cold water over my face, and this revived me. She then became aware . . . that I had behaved . . . in every way as a man. She was quite as much surprised as disquieted by this discovery and, as a matter of fact, at the end of three or four months, she noticed those changes in herself which precede labour. . . . She swore upon her conscience that no one had approached her during those months; she could wish they had, so that there might at least be some doubt.

Everyone was listening eagerly. Then I took up the tale and stated that Nannette had been the first woman to arouse "effective" desire in me. I described my experience at the time, and all that had happened to me afterwards. . . . I was convinced, everyone was convinced, of the fact of my paternity. In this connection I also related my adventure with Marguerite Pâris, her pregnancy, her departure for Paris, and our farewell beneath the Saint-Gervais archway. I told this story in great detail to an attentive audience, and Loiseau was delighted that my mind should be distracted by the narrating of it. When I had finished, Zoé asked me certain questions about Marguerite, which seemed to me so intimate that I could hardly doubt but that she had known her. I enquired if this were the case. "I have never met her myself," she answered, "but I can get information about her from Éléonore's mother, who I think knew her and is related to her." This was all she said. Everyone was dumbfounded. Seeing that my attention was distracted by the conversation, Zoé turned to Loiseau, and I noticed that though he controlled himself, he was astonished by what she was saying. Now we know that all my senses were extremely acute, my hearing as much so as my sight, and that I could divide my attention without difficulty. Therefore I was able to catch such phrases as these: "It was his daughter who saved his life. . . . She is not unlike Zéphire. . . . She loved him as much as Zéphire did. . . . What extraordinary things happen to him! . . ." I could not doubt but that they were speaking of me, but I was unable to discover what they were talking about, though everyone except myself knew before we separated.

Loiseau was a "ritualist." His delicate sensibilities were nourished on commemorations and on anything that called upon the nobility of his nature. He returned to Zéphire when we rose to go, saying that it was fitting that our celebration should end, as it had begun, with her. Everyone acclaimed his words. Then I advanced into the middle of the circle, and said: "Let me, O my friends, express my grief for my beloved daughter, whom, like another Jephtha, I have immolated. O Zéphire, whom I adored and still adore, the first fruits of my life, receive this tribute of your unhappy father's tears! . . . You know, O my Zéphire, that when I intended making you my wife, I yet always called you daughter, and more than once you gave me the name of father. Nature was speaking through our mouths, and a secret instinct, a stranger to our reason, guided us to the appropriate terms. . . . I have just learned of our relationship; I have just discovered the source of our mutual affection; of your devotion and my ineffable attachment. I am not ashamed of anything, for my heart is innocent. God is my witness that, if I had known, I would have cherished you as a father; as content and happy in this new sentiment as I was in love! I forgive your mother those sins which reunited us, and without which we should doubtless never have met. . . . But . . . I still shudder . . . lest your fair soul were tarnished! . . . But no, no . . . O Zéphire, O my daughter! I bless you, and your memory will be for ever sacred! I will carry your dear image eternally in the sanctuary of my heart! Farewell, my daughter. I leave this country solitude which gives you back to us! Farewell, farewell, my Zéphire! Farewell for ever."

With the last *Farewell!*, tears and sobs choked my utterance. . . . Then all my friends responded: "Farewell, Zéphire, the honour of your sex, virtue and beauty personified! We say goodbye to you, but we shall never forget you! . . ." The women could not utter these last words, but leaned upon us for support as they wiped away their tears. At last we left this place; but as we were about to lose sight of it, Loiseau turned to face it and, his voice more melodious than I had ever heard it, sang this song:

> *Alas, who will ever believe the misfortunes of my poor friend? Or who will read the story of his sorrows and losses without weeping? He has often been within reach of Virtue and Fortune since his childhood; but he has never tasted the fruit of them, and now Virtue and Fortune both are lost to him.*

"Ah, what secret have you, that you can make grief so exquisite a thing?" exclaimed Sidonie. "The secret is his own nature," answered Renaud. We all of us went back with Gaudet, except the weeping Suadèle who asked to be taken home. Her two sisters Rosalie and Victorine came with us to the Rue des Lombards.

While we were waiting for supper, Zéphire's mother told us her story, in answer to my question: "How could you possibly have come to enter your present profession?"

"I have always been attracted by men; and as I was physically seductive all the men came after me. It was with you that I first succumbed to the ardour of my temperament; the heat of your caresses moved me so! But I never thought there would be any consequences. . . . When I saw that my trifling with a child of ten was to bear fruit,* I was so much ashamed that I left the district without mentioning my condition to anyone. I went to Paris, and entered the service of a spurrier of the Faubourg Saint-Antoine, a widower named Percy. I told him to begin with that I had been recently widowed, but when I came to know him better I confessed the truth. Nothing could make him believe my story, and we very nearly quarrelled over it because he said that I was a liar as are all strumpets. 'If I were a liar,' I answered, 'it would have been easier to let you go on thinking I was a widow. But I prefer to tell you the truth, because I am myself so amazed at my condition that, when I begin to trust anyone, I must describe my singular case to them, to see if they can tell me if there has ever been one like it.' I convinced him at last, and he consulted his own physician, M.

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*Restif's biographers, while sometimes leaving the question open, find it difficult to accept the story of his paternal relationship to Zéphire. On the one hand, not only is paternity at the age of ten excessively rare (though medical literature records a case at the age of nine), but if Zéphire's age was, as her mother stated, and as seems quite likely, at least fourteen, Restif's paternity is brought to the age of eight. On the other hand we know that Restif was obsessed by the idea of an incestuous relationship between father and daughter, and it was always easy for his credulous imagination to believe that girls who attracted him were his daughters, even on the mere evidence of what he called "the thermometer of the heart." [Ed.]

Guilbert de Préval, about it and was told that it was not impossible. The doctor interrogated me in his presence. I concealed nothing. 'Very possible; very natural!' he said, pacing up and down with his hands behind his back. I swore by all that was most sacred that I had never known any man save this child of ten, and for this reason my master loved me and became permanently attached to me. We had already slept together, but after he was convinced, he became fond of me for myself and made me use his name; and everyone in the street knew me as Madame Percy. . . : I was brought to bed at the end of nine months to a day. (I had told both the doctor and my master the date of my adventure and asked them to write to Madame Rameau, who could get the necessary information to confirm the details of my story from her third daughter Madelon. This they did, and received a good testimonial to my behaviour at Sacy, and Mademoiselle Madelon Rameau's statement that, on the 15th of August, after Vespers, I had pursued little Monsieur Nicolas, aged ten years, into their mule stable, where he had fainted; that she, Madelon, had fetched water for Nannette to throw over the child's face, and that she herself had thrown water over him). . . . I was delivered of a daughter, who was baptised in the names suggested by her parentage: Zéphire-Colette-Edmée-Jeannette; only the last name was a mistake which came about through my master always calling me Jeannette instead of Nannette. The first name was suggested by her father's fleetness of foot and by her own delicacy. I nursed the child myself at the instance of my master, who had decided to adopt her, for which reason 'father unknown' had been entered against her in the Register. . . . Zéphire was the prettiest child ever seen. When she was about seven, my master said he wanted to marry me and recognise her as his own child. I asked nothing better. But he died after the banns had been put up for the first time, and his heirs had me sent to prison for despoiling him. Luckily my sick master had not given me his money when we were alone, but in the presence of the Curé of Sainte-Marguerite and of a certain Mlle Pâris; and several days before his decease I had entrusted both it and my daughter to the latter. Mlle Pâris was acquainted with my history and the name of my daughter's father, which was not unknown to her. Also she loved Zéphire dearly, and while she was looking after the child she took a niece to live with her, younger than Zéphire by three or four years, so that the two little girls could play together. Éléonore, the niece, was the prettiest child I have ever seen in my life, for I think she was even prettier than mine, and I said as much to Mlle Pâris one day. 'Lud, it is the father that makes them so!' she answered with a little smile. To return to myself. . . . I was in prison for six months, at the end of which time I won my case through the evidence of my two witnesses. I went from there to the house of Mlle Pâris in the Rue Charenton, and set to work to get my affairs in order. Mlle Pâris advised me to invest my money in a little second-hand clothes shop in the neighbourhood of the Saint-Esprit, as the small fair which is held there every Monday would be a useful market for my goods. I followed her advice and was doing pretty well, when I made the acquaintance of a nearby pawnbroker. We grew very friendly, and she told me the secrets of her trade. I provided her with a certain amount of capital, and this brought me in big interest. (I had had the good sense to leave more than twenty-five thousand livres in trust with Mlle Pâris, together with my daughter.) I told her nothing about my new business, and she thought that my profits came from the sale of second-hand clothes. One day my partner said to me: 'Nannette, or rather Mme Percy (for that is the name I use when I talk of you to others), you do not yet know all my little ways of getting money . . .' (whispering) 'I dress some of the girls.' 'What do you mean, "dress" some of the girls?' 'I mean the girls who must look beautiful or pretty to earn their livelihood. Listen! I have dresses to the value of twenty thousand livres, in all sizes and colours, of every kind of stuff and cut, suitable for a duchess, or a marchioness, or an honest townswoman, or an actress, or a work girl. I am paid in proportion to what the girls make. They come to my house, where I have five or six big baths. I wash and massage them, I remove any hardness or roughness from the skin, I disinfect and perfume them, whiten and fard them. I will teach you how to massage and the rest. One gets the best custom by being able to supply them with a different dress for every day. In partnership we could double our stock, for I can tell by your appearance and by what you spend that we are in about the same circumstances. And the business is a gold mine! The two of us together could manage to give our clients a different dress for every day in the year, so that they need never appear in the same one twice. . . .' I consented to go into partnership with her. I furnished my house in the same way as hers, and . . . I soon perceived that her trade was more far-reaching than she had told me. We used to massage persons of both sexes who . . ." (here Mme Deschamps made her a sign to suppress the details) "who paid well. . . . One evening, two days after a suspicious husband had caught his wife being massaged by me, I was terrified to see my house surrounded by police spies! I did not know what this portended, but I knew all about it by ten o'clock; for when I tried to go out to consult my partner, I was arrested and taken to Saint-Martin! I was handed over to the police as a brothel keeper, without being interrogated, and spent three months in the Hospital. That is what ruined me. At first I was frightened of my miserable companions, then I got used to them, and was corrupted by them. One day a man in a policeman's uniform enquired for 'Madame Percy,' though I had concealed that name and was known simply as Nannette. I went to the Superior's parlour where he was waiting. He signed me to a seat. 'I am Monsieur Maret,' he said, 'inspector of Police, and appointed by Monseigneur the Lieutenant-General, supreme magistrate over the said Police, to supervise all women and girls of the half-world (as they are called). . . . I am surprised, Madame Percy, that a woman of means like yourself (for I know something about you through your partner, who, as a relative of your late husband, has demanded the confiscation and transference to herself of your whole stock of clothes) did not put herself under the protection of the Police before beginning to practise this particular profession! . . . The profession has its fine side, and it is that side which we, Monseigneur the Lieutenant-General of Police and myself, protect. . . . You can, Madame Percy, pursue it with both credit and profit by the adoption of my scheme. I will give you this in writing, and at the same time see that all your property is returned to you. You are a widow; that is in itself a great recommendation, for we love propriety, Monseigneur the Lieutenant-General of Police and I! . . . I know that you are not without principles, because you lived for seven or eight years with the same man, without his having anything to complain of, and without robbing him even when he was dying; for what you have, he gave you. You are going to be released; I have brought a carriage, and I am going to install you again in your own house. You will be subject to a small tax, proportioned to the number of your young ladies, which will go to the upkeep of our excellent police. . . . But my written instructions will explain all that. I am told that you have a very pretty daughter. I will inform you as to the use which you can make of her at the right time and place. Now let us go." I fetched my little bundle, and, avoiding my unhappy companions, departed with him. On the way he gave me this."

She handed a paper to Loiseau, and he read as follows:

Instructions for Ladies in Charge of Houses for Public Women

1. Every Superintendent, who desires security, should submit to the inspection of the police, who will protect her and will maintain order both as regards the Women and as regards the Clients.
2. The Superintendent should realise the importance of her calling, the object of which is not merely the sale of pleasure, but the preservation of health, the suppression of licence, and the safety of Honest women through the voluntary sacrifice of honour, tranquillity and modesty made by those girls and women who devote themselves to the satisfaction of man's brutal passions.
3. They will treat the girls kindly but firmly, mitigating the vices incidental to their calling by pointing out how useful they are to the State; not only by preventing assaults on Women, Girls and Children, by keeping men from sodomy, and by diminishing adultery and the seduction of married women, but, still more so, by contributing to the public peace through taking our useful Spies for their friends, thus lessening, by what they pay the latter, the expenses of an administration as costly as it is important.
4. The Superintendent will examine, or cause to be examined, the genital health of every man who wishes to visit her Women. She should refuse, or provide with a covering, all who have syphilis or

skin disease, and should also syringe or sponge the interior and exterior of the Women; also she will not allow any such to use the bed. She will make the girls live healthily and, when they are ill, nurse them carefully and not allow them to see men.

5. She will pay by the day, on each girl, according to their beauty, youth, and freshness: 1 liv. 4 sous; 3 liv., and 6 fr. for Beginners during the first fortnight. She has no benefits on the virginity of a girl proposing to become a public woman, save after she has submitted her to the scrutiny of Monsieur the Inspector and he has assigned the fee for her defloration, and what should be paid to the police for each of the first fifteen days: for vice can only be legitimised when it is of service to the State. If . . . (This clause was not put in writing; he told it me by word of mouth, and the *If* was merely a reminder) . . . If Monseigneur the Lieutenant-General of Police reserves the right of defloration to himself, no tax will be payable, and the girl will be free for six months. If Monsieur the Inspector claims the right of defloration, either for himself or to dispose of, the tax is similarly remitted, but the girl will only be free for three months.
6. The tax on each girl is payable, half from the profits of the Superintendent, and half from the personal earnings of the girl. As the Superintendent controls the charges made for board and lodging, the hire of clothes and the rest, and also takes half of what each man pays, she should take the girls' share of this tax out of these charges without saying anything to them.
7. The Spy to whom a girl has been allotted is the only person who may take money from her; Monsieur the Inspector strictly reserves Superintendents to himself. . . .

Here Loiseau stopped, as the rest of the document contained details even less suitable for ladies' ears than the preceding ones. Nannette continued:

"Monsieur Maret took me home and forced my treacherous partner to return all my property; then he left me, telling me to conform to his instructions. I took a house in the Rue Saint-Honoré. On the first floor I kept the dresses for hire and so on; the second I used as a gaming club; on the third and fourth I housed my girls; the fifth and sixth were given over to bedrooms, and the seventh was reserved for servants. . . . But I must return to Mlle Pâris.

"She had died during my detention, but she had labelled all that belonged to me, and this was exactly returned. My daughter and little Éléonore had been boarded with a relative of Mlle Pâris, a musician's wife. I took my daughter home to live with me; and that was where I did wrong: for, in order that she should not despise me, I made her read Monsieur Maret's Instructions, and, when she asked to be made useful, I . . . set her to amuse the old men. . . . Maret found this out and, luckily! imagined that more harm had been done than was the fact; so he did not think it his duty to show her to Monseigneur the Lieutenant-General of Police, nor did he claim her flower for himself. He contented himself with making her pay double, and threatening me if I failed to give him the first virgin I discovered. In my fear I took Manon to him, as she was pretty and still intact, although she practised. He kept her with him for a fortnight, during which time he made more than six hundred louis. . . ." (Here the ladies rose, covering their faces with their fans; and Loiseau and I were very much vexed by these revelations!) "I have finished, I have finished!" exclaimed Nannette, with a soothing gesture. "I had her carefully examined on her return; she was tired out, but nothing more. This completely conciliated the good Monsieur Maret, who was fond of a bit of money. . . . That is how everything happened. I make no attempt to excuse myself; I am guilty. I have told nothing but the truth, as it is the truth that when Monsieur Nicolas began to visit my daughter, and I had talked to him, I was very pleased that my poor little girl should have an honest young man for her friend. . . . As for my niece, I cannot tell you how careful I have been to spare her! No one has ever slept with her; I always kept a girl, of her age and figure and ready dressed like her, to take her place. By her bed was a trap door which opened directly she stood upon it, and a willing girl would enter by the same way and lie with the man. One day she thus escaped the cruelties of our Princes who came to torment my girls; save for this she would have been tortured or maimed as were a number of others. . . . But since her apprenticeship she has been free of all that; and I cannot express my joy in seeing her to-day the wife of a fine lad like M. Gaudet. I have known him a trifle free in my house during the last two years; but he is none the less a good fellow, and has the best heart in the world. . . . And indeed, I have not been wicked save in sacrificing my daughter; all that she earned, and all that I earned, was invested in her name. . . . And I did almost as much for my niece, placing her own earnings to her account and everything that I earned through her. So I have lost doubly through the death of my poor child; if she had lived, she would have been rich; and when she knew that M. Nicolas was her father, she would have given him everything, capital and income. I would have resigned all my rights as a mother, save that of contributing to their well-being, and all that maternal authority which I do not deserve to exercise. . . . However, my circumstances are not straitened, for as a pawnbroker I more than doubled my original capital. Henceforward I shall confine myself to this business, out of respect to all present, and out of affection for my dear Monsieur Nicolas, to whom my other calling gives pain, and for dear M. Gaudet, my nephew and my consolation."

This recital should have caused us no surprise; yet a stupefied silence followed its conclusion, from which I was the first to recover. I asked Nannette if she knew what had become of Éléonore. "At one time she was learning drawing with a Mlle Laporte, a friend of the musician's wife. . . ." I stared at Zoé. "What is this I hear? Little Éléonore, your pupil!" "She is the daughter of that Mlle Pâris," Zoé answered. "Oh, Heavens!" I could say no more; I withdrew into myself and was silent; but an exquisite emotion of joy put fresh life into my dead heart. Relatively to time and circumstance, I had loved Éléonore as much as Zéphire herself; and what most aroused my wonder and my tenderness was that she too had brought me back to life as Zéphire had done. One can imagine what a flood of changing emotions beat against my heart! I was trembling in every limb. "Éléonore and Zéphire knew each other," I thought to myself. "They lived in the same house; the two sisters loved each other! O my dear daughters, you are even dearer to me than before! Éléonore will give me back my Zéphire; she shall be Zéphirette's mother, and Zéphirette will take the place of my eldest daughter. Some day we three will be reunited, and perhaps there will be others . . . of whose existence I as yet know nothing. I shall have a numerous family . . . who will give me back . . . all those whom I have loved . . . whom I have loved . . . and lost! . . ." I sat down to supper full of these thoughts. No one questioned me, as they already knew all there was to know about Éléonore.

Gaudet tried to recover the gaiety which had prevailed during our first meal with him. Some broad jokes passed, and he punned upon the words:

"A Gaudet must say gaudy things!" and repeated his joke to each in turn. He directed some highly seasoned remarks at Rosalie and her lover, for these two were displaying considerable ardour; whereas the other couple, Victorine and her young sweetheart, were gay and playful. . . . But neither couple had listened to Nannette's story; they had been talking or romping together. If they would have let him, Gaudet would then and there have taught them the theory and practice of love making. "Which would you rather be, a chimney sweeper or a roofer?" "A roofer," answered Leriche, "because he sees more." "A sweep," said Monclar, "because he is propped up on every side." "You've missed the point!" said Gaudet. "The roofer is on top, and the sweep is inside. . . . Now which is the better position?" . . . The two young men reflected; then Monclar said that the latter was the best position for a lover, and Leriche, that the former was the best position for an army. "You've got within a hundred miles," said Gaudet. "But the best position of all is that of a carpenter putting a peg in a hole. . . ." Renaud, who saw whither these would-be witticisms were tending, and had eaten quickly because he was curious concerning the secrets of the police, now usurped the conversation in order to question Nannette. She gave us some hideous details about the conduct of those bullies to whom certain unprotected girls were allotted as wages or half-wages for their services; and about the atrocities committed upon their unfortunate victims by men of brutal lusts, among whom the most brutal were our princes. . . . Before she began on these disclosures we had given permission to the younger members of the party to go and talk together by the fire, as they were longing to do. Our table was beside the large stove.

"No doubt the police have their reasons for making our life as hard as possible," said Nannette. "There is the Hospital to fear, the extortions of the Inspector, constant annoyances from tyrannical landlords, the outrages of casual clients, the uproar and destruction of rowdies, the arbitrary arrests of the Watch. . . . But worst of all are the extortions of the spies. Many women give themselves up to the Inspector to escape from them. When a girl has been allotted to a spy, he sleeps with her when he likes and whether he has the pox or not: cases have been known in which a poor girl has not been allowed a day's health in more than ten years, and was only left alone when she was done for; they disgustingly pollute all the body's inlets. Monsieur wants money, he demands it with atrocious insults: if you do not give it at once, he strikes you. If you argue or refuse, he maims you; he will take it by force, and if you plead that it is the money for your rent, always a considerable item, he laughs at you. If you hit him back and prove the stronger, he will have you arrested that evening; and Maret, our Inspector, and Chesnon, our Commissary, always support the spies, who bribe both of them indifferently. . . . If a woman is arrested by them, she goes straight to the Hospital, be she as honest as the Virgin, without a hearing and on the mere reading of their report. . . . Now for the sort of thing girls have to endure from bestial clients. When such men come out for a brutal riot, they generally arrive in a band. Then they force the girls to strip; make them adopt hideous and repulsive attitudes; maltreat them and cover them with filth. . . . Such brutes are often more terrible alone than in a party. I have seen one stun a girl with his fist, so that he could do all that he wanted to do to her more comfortably; another tore off a girl's nipple with his teeth while in the frenzy of possession. . . . You shudder! But all that is nothing to our Princes. . . . When they come to a house, everyone trembles and seeks to fly – but the door is guarded. They also strip the girls. They choose a girl whom they know to be ticklish, and make the others tie her to the foot of the bed, and then 'titillate' (that is their word) or tickle her until she faints. . . . Another they will bind by her four limbs upon a table, and then play at quoits upon her belly with a lighted candle stuck in her navel: if the girl moves or a quoit hits the candle, it falls over, and the cries of the burned girl entertain the players, who then begin again. . . . They amuse themselves by suckling the youngest girls, whose breath is still pure, and forcing them to swallow what they term their milk; then they salute them with the name of *Little Nurses of Princes*, and make the others lick them. They set the urine of the younger girls apart. . . . They flog the naked girls, or make their pimps flog them. . . . Usually they end by forcing these unfortunate girls to . . . play the part of men to each other, urging on recalcitrants with little pricks of their sword points. . . . They nearly always provide a fine collation, but it is in keeping with the rest; for they always mix a part of the little girls' urine, or sometimes of their own, with a liqueur; and this must be drunk with a good grace and without a quiver, on pain of being compelled, by every imaginable torment, to eat a clove of raw garlic, which skins the tongue. . . . And even now I have not told half of the horrors they commit, such as revirginating girls. . . ." The ladies made her a sign to stop. "Let us say nothing about that, then, but return to the police. They are necessary, but they can do nothing against that kind of person, and really they seem to me to do quite as much harm as they prevent."*

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*These two passages concerning prostitution were written in 1784, while I was being threatened by Le Noir. I could not print them in France, so I entered into negotiation with *Tournesheim* of Bâle, and with a Parisian bookseller in 1789. This bookseller was guillotined for uttering false paper money. I thought I should have to go to Switzerland to get them printed, but the declaration of the Republic removed all obstacles, and, as there was nothing to hinder me, I had it printed here, rather than by foreigners.

A number of comments were made upon these monstrous abuses. We deplored their existence, but Gaudet shook his head. "What is the matter?" we asked him. "My friend understands all about these things," he answered, looking at me, "and my cousin Gaudet explained one day how they happen. . . ." "Tell us, my friend." "The point is a simple one," I answered. "D'Arras contends that men are incapable of making a law without at the same creating a corresponding abuse. Every rule imposed by man on man to secure peace, stability and happiness subtracts as much from his liberty as it adds to his tranquillity. In this connection he read us a little satire entitled *Soap-Bubbles*, in which he ridiculed the benefits men claim for laws and institutions. I am more or less of his opinion, for it is supported by experience. I remember that he also said that Vice and Virtue were the two extremes of one whole, and that each of them was as necessary as are darkness and light." "Stop, stop!" interrupted Loiseau, and he intoned his Hymn to Poverty. . . . Then we sang the four poems concerning Zéphire, the three I had written and Loiseau's, and with this we finished. "This is not the last of these delightful celebrations," said Sidonie, "because I shall invite you all to ours. . . . And when am I to see them married . . ." pointing to Loiseau and Zoé, "and Suadèle and . . ." (pointing to me), "and those two young couples? And others, for the time will come for them too." (M. Deschamps, who was ill, had jestingly bequeathed his wife to Renaud.) I complained because Zéphirette had had no share in the party, so they led me to a pretty cradle trimmed with green taffeta, and showed me the sleeping child. I blessed her, and we departed.

Directly we were in the street I separated from the rest; I would not even accompany Rosalie and Victorine, who were taken back in a carriage, although they were going the same way as I: I wanted to be alone with myself when I visited the place where Zéphire had died. I gazed at this house, with tears streaming down my cheeks. . . . Suadèle heard me sobbing and, opening the window, said in a low voice: "Take this note; it is from Her." I put it in my bosom:

> *"Dear and only friend! You will not receive this letter, written in perfect health the day after our lovely party at Ménilmontant, save in the event of my death. I bequeath your heart and all your person, as belonging to me, to Suadèle Amélie-Guisland, the daughter of my kind and estimable mistress. I bequeath you to her, my friend, that you may make her happy with your love; for her happiness is as precious to me as my own, and I shall see it from the other world. To my daughter Zéphirette, I bequeath her father as friend and protector, and Suadèle, as mother and friend of her own sex; and, in case of any unforeseen event, I name my sister Manon, should she become Madame Gaudet or the wife of any other honest man, to take Suadèle's place as my daughter's guardian. . . . I implore my dear Suadèle to love her friend and mine tenderly; to care for him as a mother, and to respect his time and his meditations; for kind, wise Monsieur Loiseau anticipates that his friend will produce something one day. Therefore respect this precious trust. And preserve as carefully as your husband's heart, the friendship of that excellent Mademoiselle Zoé, a worthy second to the virtuous Loiseau. . . . Do not neglect Mademoiselle Sidonie; she is to be Madame Boudard and, as such, might be useful to your husband. There is no need to mention Madame Deschamps, my adopted mother: she will be your sister-in-law. Watch over my sister Manon, and strengthen her with your advice. See something of my poor mother, and foster her better nature as I would have done. Cherish my child, and speak to her often of me; tell her that I loved her, as I loved her father and as I loved you, my Suadèle! Praise me to each other in her presence, so that she may think well of me.*
>
> *"I shall have said* Goodbye *to you when you read this, my Will, whereby I bequeath to you and to my daughter all that is or would be mine.*
>
> *ZÉPHIRE PERCY."*

Suadèle's postscript: *"I accept all my friend's proposals: it is she that I love* *in you; everyone except her father, the source of this sweet life which I adored, is hateful to me. I sign this in my blood.*

Suadèle."

I did not read this letter until I had reached home. As she was shutting the window, Suadèle sang sobbing:

When you hear zephyr plaining among the reeds . . . deem it a sigh!

I lost the rest, but presently her voice rose again, and I heard:

When a dove comes to mourn upon a branch far from its mate. . . .

(Here Zéphire's harp throbbed dolorously.)

Know, Zéphire, that your absence will bring me death!

The harp completed the melody. . . .

I was lost in a mood of inexpressible tenderness, when I became aware that some one was speaking to me. It was Loiseau and Zoé: "At least one charming daughter is left to you," said the latter. "Éléonore is a prodigy, as was her elder sister whose misfortunes she has not endured. She will be happy, and her future is assured. A lady about the Court, who can be recommended as a virtuous woman, is taking care of her. She knows the circumstances and position of her mother, a good and virtuous woman despite her mishap, and her father's also. We will arrange for you to see Éléonore again before time has effaced your features from her memory. I talked to her about you the last time I saw her, and . . . I must confess . . . I told her that the man who had so loved her at Bonne Sellier's was her father, though he did not know it at the time. . . . In spite of her youth, she was deeply moved, and expressed the strongest desire to see you again. But the Comtesse d'Egmont, her guardian (who has provided her with a little companion of two-and-a-half, known as *Reine Septimanette*

Courtenay), is opposed to this for the present. But she will give her consent in time; and if she does not, for the Richelieus are self-willed, I promise that I will help to cozen her." "Friends," I answered, "I feel . . . that Zéphire would have been dearer to me as my daughter than as my sweetheart; judge then of my sorrow! . . . Éléonore is a great consolation, and so is my little Zéphirette; and the balm of joy distils from these two names and penetrates my heart." Zoé kissed me. . . . "Oh, how happy you would have been!" she exclaimed. "But destiny gave you everything, only to snatch it from your grasp! May it leave you Éléonore and Zéphirette!" "And Suadèle," added Loiseau; for he had been Zéphire's only confidant in the matter of her Will, and knew that it was to be given me on this day.

We parted, and I returned into my little room in the Rue Sainte-Anne; for, since the death of her who would have put me in easy circumstances, I was again poor and had gone back to the garret, papered with theatrical posters, from which she had rescued me. . . . And there I read Zéphire's Will. . . . At first I could only weep, but later I was touched by the attitude adopted by Suadèle. "No, generous friend!" I exclaimed. "I should only bring you bad luck! No, I will pass the rest of my life in remembering Zéphire and mourning for her." I still had her daughter; but she was persistently kept away from me. Long after, when in the depths of misfortune I insisted on having news of her, I was given to understand that she was dead. . . . I found out later that Gaudet feared the effect that the sight of her might have upon me. Also he wanted to adopt her as Manon had no children, and, I was told, made his wife feign pregnancy, so that some day he could introduce Zéphirette into his family. But I was also told that one of Manon's cousins, who was still a public woman, stole away the child. We shall hear later what became of her. . . .

Next day I handed the Will to Loiseau, to read himself and to show to Mlle Delaporte. He kissed it, and put it in his wallet. No longer did I mourn for my lost sweetheart, but for my daughter; and from this point of view Éléonore and Zéphirette were a potent consolation. The former brought pure joy into my life. She came rarely to Paris, but I had the chance of seeing her once. On this occasion Zoé told me to walk past a certain house, and at the same time dropped a hint to Éléonore. The sweet child recognised me and ran to me. I pressed her to my heart. I was astounded by her beauty, and everyone in Bonne Sellier's house could bear witness that I was not prejudiced by a father's tenderness. She was then just nine years old, as she was born at the end of 1749. "Dear little father," she said, "I love you with all my heart, and I will never forget you wherever I may be. . . . You are freer to do what you like than I am; so, please, never lose sight of your daughter; and she will conscientiously guard your right to dispose of her." Mlle Zoé called her away as she finished this little speech. . . . Next day I asked Zoé whether she had taught it to Éléonore, and she answered: "I suggested the substance of it, but the way she said it was entirely her own." I was enchanted. . . .

Some time afterwards *Aurore*, who had been a pretty comrade of Zéphire's at Nannette's though I had never noticed her there, recognised me in the Palais-Royal gardens, and introduced herself in order to ask news of Zéphire. My tears were a sufficient answer, and Aurore expressed compassion for my young friend. Afterwards she told me that she was living with Mme Macé, near by in the *Rue Fromenteau*, opposite the Château d'Eau. The latter was on the point of selling the business to a Mme Dupont, a milliner of the Foire. She urged me to come and see her to tell her all the news. This I did, and thus began a kind of intimacy between myself and Aurore, who used all the arts of pleasure to retain me. . . . La Macé uttered a cry of joy and surprise on seeing me. She referred to my adventure with the lady in the Rue des Prêtres-Saint-Séverin, and told us (no doubt to enhance her prestige with her successor, la Dupont) that she enjoyed my charmer's confidence. My lady was married, but her husband never "visited" her; so, as she wanted to have a child, she had come to la Macé to get one by some healthy and vigorous young man of about the same cut as her husband. She had behaved like a public woman (La Macé continued), in fact, a little like a Messalina, although she was nothing of the sort; and this was not only to disguise herself from me. She had come from a ball that the Prince *de Salm* was giving in his hotel in the Faubourg Saint-Germain (so La Macé had been told) whither she had gone to join her husband. There, masked and her blood well warmed, she had succeeded in warming him too and in persuading him to lie with her. . . . So thoroughly had she roused him that he was on the point of possessing her, thinking that she was Mlle Lyonnais of the Opéra, when he recognised her, spat upon her secret charms, and went away. . . . If I had insisted on following her when she left the house, the man whom I had seen with her in the morning, and another, had orders to kill me; that was why La Macé had sent Spirette Laval to detain me. . . .* The lady had been brought to bed, on the 22nd February, 1757, of a daughter, who had been christened Reine Septimanette Courtenay. The child was being brought up with a view to legitimising her if the lady's husband (who did not know of her existence) died first, as the lady knew of a man who was clever enough to substitute her husband's name for that of "Courtenay" in the register, by a process of fusion and obliteration. . . . La Macé also

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*See *Drame de la Vie*, p. 998, wherein, in nearly all cases, I give as fact what I only suspected at the time.

knew the origin of the child's names: the first was chosen because I called the lady *Reine* throughout the act; the second, because it was the diminutive of her mother's name; the third, because she knew that La Macé was acquainted with my family and, having questioned her, gathered that one of my grandmothers was a Courtenay. This is what La Macé told me, with many marks of affection. During the narration Aurore caressed me, part in loving and part in wanton fashion, in the presence of the two women; and, encouraged by the latter, I should have fallen shamefully to the lure of pleasure, had it not been for the combined memories of Zéphire and Suadèle. I had to betake myself to flight; but I returned to that house.

Physically exhilarated by Aurore, and spiritually by Suadèle (and perhaps a little physically also), my fondness for the fair sex took hold of me again and I began to seek the society of women. (All those with whom I had been in intimate relation had made them so lovable to me!) Never now was I in the mood for violent passion save when my heart was deeply stirred by memories, whether of Jeannette Rousseau or Colette, of Madelon or Marianne Tangis, or of my sister Demailly, or, in the last resort, of my incomparable Zéphire. . . . The power of these divine enchantresses stretched beyond absence and the tomb! And here we have an example of human motivation which novelists and moralists do not sufficiently understand. On the contrary, they are astonished when a tender, favoured lover replaces her whom he has lost by death. Ah, it is his very happiness which urges him to choose anew. One is far more faithful to a memory of hate, for that shuts up the heart. . . .

Everyone looked to Suadèle Guisland as the young person for me. We already know her attitude in the matter, and that she was Zéphire's legacy to me: I was dear to her and her mother respected me. The latter told me one day that she would give her eldest daughter to me, even at the possible sacrifice of her future happiness, because, since Suadèle had learned that I was Zéphire's father, she lived for me alone. "It is a real passion in her," she added. "She was saying yesterday that it was only Zéphire whom she loved in you. . . . She would be dead by now, if she did not see your daughter in you. So I owe her to you, since, without you, I should not have her. . . . Moreover our dear Zéphire merited this affection, and we all had it for her. That child was a prodigy!" She tried to hide her tears. . . . I fell at her feet, exclaiming: "My mother, O worthy mother of my Suadèle! I swear that she shall be happy in so far as it depends on me!" Mme Guisland kissed me and put her daughter's hand in mine; for Suadèle had entered when I raised my voice in exclamation.

Mlle Zoé saw much of Suadèle and together they undertook the arrangements for our marriage, which was equally desired by every member of our little group. My father was written to, and his consent obtained. At all our parties Suadèle was my Zéphire, and she liked to be called by that name. And she was as pretty as Zéphire, though in a different way. I was very fond of her, and everyone was delighted to see us such good friends. She never talked of anything but Zéphire to me, and I used to call her daughter. One could not imagine a girl more richly endowed with the gifts peculiar to her sex, or one more capable. She brought joy and comfort to the hearts of all my freinds, who were so concerned for both of us. . . . But such happiness was not for me! I was never to possess Suadèle, never to succeed in marrying save to my detriment!

Deschamps died of apoplexy the very day of our good friend Boudard's marriage with Sidonie, and this put a stop to all festivities. We held our celebration some weeks later. Suadèle and I were dressed in mourning, and she looked ravishing. Joy shone on every face, for we looked forward to Zoé's marriage with Loiseau in the spring, and Renaud's with Élisabeth Leriche in a year. Suadèle and I were to be married as soon as possible, and Leriche and Rosalie after us. The Gods favoured these plans in part, and delivered the rest to the scattering winds. The celebration was held at Ménilmontant, and never had I been so deeply conscious of my happiness in being loved by Suadèle; never had she seemed to me so beautiful. . . . The victim was prepared! . . . We had sung our hymns; our Farewells to Zéphire had been pronounced, and we were on our way to rejoin our carriages on the high road, when our notice was attracted by shouts, as on the day of the *Hi, there!*. We looked round, and saw some men running with field implements in their hands. While we were watching them, inattentive to all else, my Suadèle, who was leaning upon my arm, cried out weakly: "Oh, the dreadful beast!" A great black dog had just bitten her hand as he dashed past. . . . I seized her bleeding hand and sucked it. . . . Everyone tried to prevent me. "Leave me alone!" I exclaimed. "I am saving my Zéphire!" I sucked and sucked, in spite of Suadèle's protests, and did not desist until the flow of blood was exhausted. The men stood with crossed arms, watching in consternation. . . . The dog was killed a hundred paces farther on, and, realising too well the significance of this, Suadèle exclaimed: "Ah, what have you done, dear friend! It will only prolong my agony! . . ." She tried to walk, but I was obliged to bear her in my arms to the carriage, as I had borne Zéphire! . . .

What more is there to say? My sweet and lovely Suadèle passed from swoon to swoon until the moment of her death. At eight o'clock in the morning of the day after, she died upon my breast, as had Zéphire; and it was the fear that I would go mad through having sucked her wound which caused her death: she perished through what I had done to save her.

How can I express my grief! . . . My anguish was as bitter as her mother's, but for her the shock was too much: she blessed me for what I had done to save her daughter's life and followed her to the grave. And I, who had lost my Zéphire for the second time . . . who had lost Mme Parangon! . . . am still alive—thanks to the one friend left to me; the one thing I had not lost! But only I know what I suffered in this final loss of Zéphire! . . . I think, from what happened after, that shock and despair weakened my judgment.

One day, when I was beginning to recover from the shock of Suadèle's death, I said to my two dear friends Loiseau and Zoé: "I have lost everything! In all the world nothing is left to me." "You still have a friend," exclaimed Loiseau, "who feels your grief as keenly as you do yourself!" "Ah, but he is right," said Zoé, "he has lost everything! He has nothing left! He has lost his love! . . . You offer him friendship as a consolation for Zéphire-Suadèle; but friendship is not love! Love can leave us destitute, even when the tenderest friend remains! . . . Think what he has lost. . . . Can he cease to grieve? Let us strive to mitigate his sorrow by proofs of our attachment; but do not let us even wish to destroy it, for we should not love him without it!" And Zoé wept. Loiseau could say nothing, because he approved of her words. . . . After a moment she continued: "But . . . you are still the luckiest of men in your friends! If you only knew how sincerely we love you! And our love has an added tenderness since your misfortunes, because we are more concerned for you. . . . Personally I regard you as a sacred trust confided to me by Heaven, that I may snatch you from despair! And, ah, the joy, when I am sure of having succeeded! When I can say to the man who holds my heart: *Here is the friend you love more than yourself and as much as me; I give him back to you, and it is to me you owe him. . . .*"

Dear Reader, what do you think of Zoé? Zoé, whose warm heart and ardent temperament made her play the coquette a little, until she found a man worthy of her, and then loved that man to the day of his death and could not live on without him? . . . O saintly, virtuous friends! I prostrate myself to adore you – *Colette! Zéphire! Suadèle! Loiseau!* and thou *Zoé!* Accept my homage; you added stature to my soul; and all that is good in me, I owe to you and to my virtuous father and my excellent mother! Of myself, alas, and without your saving memory, I should be but an abortion, bereft of strength and energy and virtue! After you, I encountered evil-intentioned men, such as *Dhemmery, Saint-Léger, Desmarolles, Albert, Blanchard-Lavallette, Sancy, Pointcloud, Fontanes, Joubert, Milran, Defer,* etc.; but I had been compensated for them in advance by having known and been loved by the finest people of either sex, though this, alas, made my suffering all the keener and my regrets more bitter! I began by knowing the glory of humanity, and end by knowing its shame! . . . O my dear lost friends! My dear Loiseau, whose virtue was the soul of our small society! From your fair spirit's happy dwelling place, look down upon your wretched friend, bowed under the weight of his misfortunes, and fearing yet greater evils! See, after thirty-six years, how his tears flow for you, and for your Zoé whose eyes he closed when the skeleton hand of death had been laid upon her! . . .

This conversation took place in the evening. Next morning my first waking thought was of the four daughters I had so far discovered: the one I had lost, and the three who remained to me. I grieved for Zéphire; my heart leapt for joy at the thought of Eléonore and Zéphirette; I called to mind what had been told me about Madelon's daughter; it was vague enough, but I was to meet her one day without recognising her.* Then my

*In 1772.

mind united the dear image of Colette to those of my daughters; she too had made me a father, though I did not know it. . . . I dreamed of all those whom I had loved. I thought of Colombe . . . with pain. . . . You were not forgotten, unhappy Marianne Tangis! I grew pensive over the favours ravished from Edmée on the eve of her wedding day. . . . I dressed. A letter was brought to me from Bonne Sellier's; the writing was not unfamiliar; I opened it. It was dated the 4th February, 1758, that is to say, it had been written a year previously, and it was signed . . . *Rose Lambelin!* . . . The letter flattered my vanity, for it expressed a desire to renew our friendship and reminded me that the two years of separation agreed upon were over. So I was freed from the ignominy of rejected love! I was delighted; I swelled with pride; but I did not feel inclined to let Rose's image succeed that of the charming Suadèle in my heart. I do not regret having forgotten this seventh letter as it contained nothing of interest, probably because it had been sent through the post. I went to work.

In the evening I went, according to my custom, to the street of Zéphire-Suadèle; but it was for the last time. I wanted to say good-bye to this sacred spot, which, since the death of Mme Guisland, had become terrible to me. I paid my homage to Zéphire in a low-toned song, but my voice rose for my farewells to Suadèle.

> *Fair and for ever mourned Suadèle, my everlasting anguish shall grant a life coterminate with mine to Zéphire and Suadèle, one in their loves!*

I had just repeated this impromptu song for the second time, when I noticed two ladies in black coming towards me from the Rue Christine, whom I mistook at first for Rosalie and Victorine. As they came nearer, however, I saw that it was an old woman with a ravishing girl, both of whom looked to be English. They were walking arm in arm, and the elder one was saying to the younger: "My dear niece, do not distress yourself so! What is the matter that your eyes are so swelled with weeping?"* and the niece replied: "What will become of me?"* Now Loiseau, Zéphire, Zoé, Suadèle, Mlle Mentelle and myself had been learning English, and I was just beginning to understand it a little. So I accosted the two foreigners. "You are English, Ladies?"* I said. "If I can be of any service to you, do not hesitate to make use of me." "You are very kind, *Monchieu*," said the Aunt. I made no answer, but I followed them. They went into a little house in the Rue Pavée, and I guessed that they had taken a furnished room there; as from hereabouts to the Pont Neuf is the English quarter. This was why Suadèle had instigated us to learn the language; she wanted to be able to understand and reply to her mother's English clients. I got a perfect view of the niece through the windows while the old Aunt was talking to the landlady. She was beautiful from top to toe: rose-gold curly hair, a virginal Greek profile, and a perfect waist. . . . "O God," I exclaimed, "she is like Zéphire. . . ." Her great eyes combined with her *English* bashfulness, gave her an angelic look. In a word, she was exactly made to charm me; for the noble cast of her features was not unlike Suadèle's. I gazed at her until the Aunt had secured the key and the lighted candle, and they went upstairs to their room. Then I entered the house and addressed a girl of fifteen who was alone in the parlour. "Can you tell me, Ma'm'selle, if the two ladies who have just come in are staying in Paris for some time?" "Monsieur, they are two English ladies, an aunt and her niece, and are here about a property to which the younger one is heiress through her paternal grandmother, who was a Frenchwoman. They are having great difficulty in getting the matter settled, on account of the war with England. The only way to win their case is for the young *Miss* to marry a Frenchman, and this her aunt does not wish." "Could you tell me their names?" "The aunt is called *Mistriss Macbell* and the niece, *Miss Harriet Kircher.*" I thanked the girl and went away, well pleased to have found out the names of the two foreigners. At this time both Renaud and I were strong Anglophiles, and the young person's nationality enflamed my ardour as much as did her beauty. And yet my mind was no less filled by Zéphire-Suadèle for this; just as, when I had Suadèle-Zéphire, I regretted Madame Parangon as much as ever. I identified the sweet image of the English girl with the memory of all that I had ever loved; and most especially with the exquisite emotion which always filled my heart at the thought of my dear Eléonore. As I walked homewards I expressed this emotion in Cardinal de Bernis's charming cantilena:

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*The English is Restif's. [Ed.]

Éléonore, knowest thou who by chance is
This tender child that follows everywhere,
And would be still a child, had not your glances
Made him a cruel god at unaware?

I said nothing about my new discovery to Loiseau; nor did I mention it to Zoé who was equally dear to me, for she combined the tender cares of Zéphire with the delicacy and tact of Madame Parangon.

On waking next morning, my heart leapt at the thought of the English girl, Henriette Kircher; for I believed I had refound in her the Zéphire I had loved before I knew the tie uniting us – or rather, perhaps, another Suadèle. . . . Busy with these thoughts, I went to work. At midday I did not fail to walk down the Rue Pavée, and saw the aunt coming out of the house. The niece remained indoors. I accosted *Mistriss* Macbell, saying: "Is Madame familiar with the locality?" a strange enough question on my part, but it was well received. "No, not very!" answered the old lady, smiling. I offered her my arm as escort. "But Monsieur, I do not know you." "Pardon me, Madame, I spoke to you yesterday. You are *Mistriss* Macbell, of Irish extraction and the aunt of Miss Henriette: and you have come here on legal business concerning your niece's succession to the property of her paternal grandmother, which she is likely to lose unless she marries a Frenchman." "You know me, then!" "Yes, *Mistriss.*" She took my arm and told me that she wanted to go to her lawyer in *Bièvre-Street.* On the way she asked me how I came to know her. . . . Then I remembered an Englishman whom I had come across, named Smith, and said that I had heard about her through this man. She tried to remember him, but could not. She asked me where he lived, but I told her that he had left the country. . . . Her lawyer had no very good news to give her, and Mistriss Macbell seemed to be in some perplexity. I escorted her home, and we went upstairs together. There I saw the charming niece, and was introduced to her as the young man whom they had met the evening before. Then they talked together in English, and in so low a tone that I could hear nothing, except the name *Smith.* They were both most polite to me, so I allowed something of my admiration for Miss Henriette to appear, and she seemed flattered by it. . . . I discreetly withdrew almost at once; but asked permission to call again, and this was granted. Miss Henriette said: "*Farewell!*" as I was going out; and I responded with these lines of Pope, which I recited with great feeling:

My fancy form'd thee of angelic kind,
Some emanation of th'all beauteous Mind!
Those smiling eyes, attempering every ray,
Shone sweetly lambent with celestial day.

She smiled, and I went back to work.

Loiseau was doubly pleased to see me back: firstly because our work was urgent, and secondly because he had felt a little anxious about me since the sucking of Suadèle's hand. But no ill came of that: seemingly the madness of love makes one proof against all other madnesses. . . . I worked like a navvy, as I always did in moments of strong emotion. In the evening I mentioned the two foreigners casually to Loiseau and the means whereby they could win their case; I also told him the name of their lawyer. "Their opponents' memorandum is being printed here," he remarked. I made no comment; but I resolved . . . The Reader will judge of my action for himself; for myself, I scarcely know in what terms to qualify it: but I can honestly say that, at the moment, to betray my trust with the object of warning the two foreigners concerning their opponents' line of attack seemed not only permissible, but praiseworthy. When Loiseau and I parted after supper, I hurried off at once to the two Englishwomen, and said to the aunt: "I think that I shall be able to do you a small service to-morrow. I know where your lawyer lives, and I shall be calling on him. . . ." She thanked me warmly, and so did the pretty niece. "I could also help you more satisfactorily," I continued, "because I am free (that is to say a bachelor) and a French subject. . . . In fact I have all the papers on me now that are required before marriage. . . ." They looked at each other, and made some civil remark. I did not think it wise to press for a decision, so I withdrew.

On my arrival at work next morning I made enquiries quite openly about the memorandum. I found out that two sets of proofs had already been taken, considerable changes having been made in the first set. A copy of the first set was easily procured, as the compositor had left them lying about, but I had more difficulty over the second. However I secured them at last, did all up in a package, sealed it, and despatched it to the ladies' lawyer by a messenger who had no connexion with the shop, at the same time tearing the entry concerning them out of the works' record book. The importance of the corrections recommended by the subtle barrister to his hack was obvious to our lawyer at a glance; he held his tongue and used his advantage: and, through his conduct of the case, gained the reputation of a wise and clever lawyer, not to be caught napping. The criminal tactics of our adversaries turned to our advantage. They kept back their memorandum until the day before judgment was to be delivered, so that there should be no time to take the necessary steps to forestall their attack. But our lawyer, doubly informed as to their plans, for the corrections made in proof were as useful to him as the memorandum itself, asked *Mistriss* Macbell if she could get her niece married within eight or ten days. The old Irishwoman looked at me, and her questioning glance encouraged me to say that, for my part, I was ready. I showed my papers to the lawyer, who, having examined them, said that they were in order, and that there was nothing to do save to have the banns called once in my native place. Henriette, who had accompanied her aunt on this occasion, thanked me charmingly. The lawyer wrote himself at once to ask for a dispensation from publishing the banns three times, and this he received by the end of the week. During this interval, his position strengthened by Henriette's marriage which he could regard as concluded, he attacked the enemy's last line of defence, in a memorandum which he held ready to distribute at the same moment that they produced the one they were holding in reserve. The lawyer received the necessary papers from Burgundy (my parents being under the impression that I was marrying Suadèle, about whom Loiseau had written to them) and came round to urge us to finish the business. A most tender scene had just taken place between Henriette and myself as he entered, the result of my confession of the means I had used to serve her. I had been fondled and made much of, and my professions of love had been favourably received. "Everything is ready now," said the lawyer. "I have the dispensation and the banns have been published here also at Saint-André. When is the marriage to take place?" "That depends on these ladies," I answered. "At once, then!" exclaimed the lawyer. "The bride will have an income of seven thousand five hundred francs, not to mention certain valuables and cash in hand." He then gave a thousand crowns to the aunt, for which he took a receipt. "The marriage can be performed by the chaplain to the English Ambassador?" asked Macbell. "Certainly not, if you please," answered the lawyer quickly. "It must be at Saint-André, and by our priests. Also Mademoiselle must be confessed and receive the certificate." The aunt said nothing, and Henriette agreed. So I took her to the Cordeliers, where Saint-Hermine was now in residence, while the lawyer and her aunt went to Saint-André to fix a time next day for the wedding. On my advice, Henriette acquired a certificate without confessing, and afterwards we went to the Luxembourg. Here her attitude towards me was most flattering; either she was already beginning to love me, or she was at least greatly attracted! . . . There was no one in on our return; I obtained all that I wanted, and . . . made her my wife. We were surprised by the aunt, but not one word of reproof did she utter, even as a matter of form. I was amazed! . . . She addressed me gently and affectionately, saying that, as we did not belong to the same communion and were to be married in mine, she wanted the Ambassador's chaplain to give us his blessing that evening. I regarded it as merely a point of conscience, and consented. "Two English witnesses will be present," she added, "but the whole business must be kept a complete secret from the French." I agreed to everything, though I did not in the least understand what she had in her mind, and was not sufficiently interested to find out; indeed it was such that I could never have guessed it. The lawyer had emphasised to my father that the match was an excellent one for me, and when I returned to the printing works I found a letter from this estimable old man, saying that *he gave his consent to an advantageous marriage, and had a sufficiently good opinion of me to believe that I would only contract such a marriage.* When I returned in the evening for the ceremony which was to be performed by the minister, I took this letter with me, and everyone was pleased by it. The minister asked the usual questions; and one of the witnesses, who called himself *Mylord Taaff*, answered with more truth than I then realised; and we were as thoroughly married as if we had been at *Green** in Scotland. The minister and the three witnesses withdrew after the ceremony.

When we were alone together, I expressed a wish to sleep with Henriette, and no objection was made to this. . . . What a delicious night! . . . At six o'clock next morning we were married at Saint-André in the presence of the lawyer and the four witnesses he had brought with him. . . . The case was decided next day, and we won on all counts, with costs and damages.

So here I was married and almost wealthy, the possessor of a wife as charming as Suadèle and Zéphire in one, who had seemingly dropped from Heaven without trouble or effort on my part. All my losses were made good; I was adored by my young wife, and made much of by her aunt. I regarded myself as a privileged being whom Heaven could never utterly desert; for no sooner did I lose one dear and beautiful girl, than another as

*Meaning Gretna Green. [Ed.]

beautiful, as worthy to be loved, and wealthier was sent to me. I was tempted to consider my good fortune as the consequence of personal merit, and became as conceited as, eighteen months before, I had been abject.

I had left my attic in the Rue Sainte-Anne directly after my marriage to go and live with my wife and her aunt. As I frequently absented myself from work, Loiseau, having something to discuss with me, went one morning to my old lodgings in search of me. The landlord told him regretfully that I had left. He said that he thought I was living in the Rue Pavée, and that I was going to marry quite a pretty English girl. My friend was dumbfounded! On his return to the shop he found me in full swing as though I had been working for some time, for an effervescent energy drove me, and also I did not want to have recourse to my wife for my personal needs. Loiseau did not conceal his anxiety. Fear lest he might suspect me of crapulous debauch and remorse in that I had deceived him and kept secrets from him, combined with my affection (which love had in no way diminished; on the contrary, I felt it the more intensely for the wrong I had done him) determined me to confess everything without reservation. I expected delight in my good fortune, but he heard me to the end gravely, and in answer to my expostulations, he said:

Mores amici noveris, non oderis.

"My friend, as you were determined to commit an imprudent action, and one which is contrary to your most vital interests (for to marry precipitately and to fail in filial duty must always be so), I am grateful to you for not having made me your accomplice. For if you had told me your intentions, and then said: 'I want this, and you must help me,' I should have helped you against my better judgment, and I should have been to blame; whereas now I am innocent." "But what have I done wrong?"

I asked. "It is a very good match." "That is true; but have you your parents' consent?" "Here it is." "Yes, but this is only expressed in general terms; their special consent was necessary in the case of an English woman and a Protestant. . . . You have disposed of the son of excellent and most respectable parents without their having any clear understanding of the position, and have given them a daughter-in-law whom you yourself scarcely know; a foreigner with no ties in your country! You will have children who will bear your father's name without his having consented to their mother bearing it! . . . Would you like it, if you had a son? But the thing is done. Bring your wife to see us so that she may become our friend, or take us to see her." "Come," I exclaimed, "come and meet my Henriette, and then congratulate me!"

At midday Loiseau followed me in silence. I had talked so much of him by name to the ladies that he needed no introduction. Henriette received him most graciously, but it seemed to me that *Mistriss* Macbell looked at him with no favourable eye. I was glad to see that my friend was astounded by Henriette's beauty. He studied her from head to foot, and especially admired her beautiful curly hair, shot with a faint rosy glow such as painters give to the little Cherubim lighted by a glory. . . . As Loiseau was leaving us, I begged him to gather my friends of both sexes together on the next day, Sunday, in Mlle Zoé's apartment on the third floor of Grandjean's house (where she was now living for the sake of her pupils) so that I could introduce them to my wife. He joyfully agreed.

We set out at two o'clock next day for our visit to Mlle Delaporte, and Henriette looked ravishing in her English toilet. The aunt accompanied us. All my friends with their sweethearts were already there waiting for us. The aunt went in first, and everyone took such an immediate dislike to her that there was some difficulty in disguising this, although Loiseau went forward to welcome her courteously. But when I led Henriette into the room, everyone was enchanted with her. I told her Zoé's name and that she was our hostess, so she went up to her first, and, kissing her affectionately, told her how much she longed to know her and my other friends. Mme Deschamps was standing next to Zoé and Henriette greeted her in the same way; and afterwards Mlle Mentelle and Mme Werkawin. I pointed out Manon, whom, with pretty grace, she addressed as sister, and she ended up with Rosalie and Victorine, to whom she seemed much attracted. . . . Then she hesitated. . . . Renaud claimed her for the men. Henriette looked at me and, at a sign, curtsied deeply to each of them in turn, beginning with Loiseau, and they embraced her. In a word, Henriette showed so much proper feeling in her behaviour with both the men and the women that she was universally liked. It was quite otherwise with her aunt. *Mistriss* Macbell's conversation was in the worst taste, and she explained her niece's marriage on grounds so sordid and so base (she thought the seven ladies were merely light women gathered there to amuse themselves with their gallants) that she made the women blush and the men indignant. I will give an example to make my meaning clear. We were all laughing and apparently enjoying ourselves very much together while waiting for dinner, when Macbell broke in coarsely: "If I had known that there would have been one woman too many, I should have brought Mylord Taaff to amuse her. . . ." I was out of the room when she made this remark, and as Henriette kept with me or with Loiseau or Zoé, she did not hear it either. When we rejoined the others, everyone was looking very serious. But the sight of Henriette soon dispelled the gloom engendered by her aunt. At dinner, my wife displayed all the frank charm of her pure nature, while the aunt exposed the black and sordid depths of hers. . . . Directly we left the table, Mme Deschamps said to me: "Get your wife away from her aunt; to-morrow is not too soon if it is possible." "It is not possible," I answered, "for she made me sign certain papers this morning." (These concerned the realising of what Henriette had inherited, and Macbell had obtained my signature by giving me a second document to read concerning certain other arrangements and then adroitly substituting the first for the second.) "Then I pity you!" said Mme Deschamps. "Would you have believed that she could have been capable of saying such a thing as this? I was remonstrating with her for addressing an indecent remark to our two young girls, and she answered impudently: 'Oh, all right, all right! You are very particular! As if everyone in England did not know that all French women are . . ." (And she used a vile word which I cannot utter.) "Lud! Monsieur Renaud called her to order! He talked to her for a quarter of an hour, and only stopped when you came back into the room." *Mistriss* Macbell overheard a part of Mme Deschamps's advice to me, and was very much annoyed! She complained to Gaudet, who, I know not how, had met her before I did (which led me to introduce that episode into the *Drame de la Vie*, wherein it is he who presents me to Henriette to mitigate my grief). He told her that she had brought it on herself; that she had talked like a bawd and that he would not conceal this fact from me. She started scolding at me that same evening, and said that she could not understand prostitutes who played the prude! "What do you mean? I would not introduce either you or your niece to prostitutes! They were honest women and girls, all of them married or engaged to be married." She repeated the infamous remark which had scandalised the ladies. . . . I answered her as best I could, and enlightened her as far as possible on the customs and way of life among Parisians; but she only replied, shaking her head: "Pretty maid French, they have no morality."* I held my tongue.

On the following Wednesday, *Deséry*, a distant relative of mine and a native of Vermenton, arrived from Burgundy. He enquired for me in the Rue Sainte-Anne, and my landlord told him where to find me. He arrived at supper time, but I did not want to keep him for the meal, for fear lest *Mistriss* Macbell should make one of the indecent remarks which came so readily to her lips. So I said that I would take him at once to Loiseau, whom he already knew well, and who had a bed to give him. But, for some private reason of her own, Macbell exclaimed: "What, are you not staying to supper? Your wife will eat nothing! Have supper with us, *Monshieur*. My niece is English, *Monshieur*, and a Protestant; she has hardly any friends here, and finds it very dull when her husband is not with her." "Your *wife*?" asked Séry, with a snigger. "Yes, my *wife*. What else do you expect a young lady with a property of fifty thousand crowns to be if not my wife? Such a wife as Miss Henriette is a credit to me. . . ." He cackled again. "Pretty women have always run after you. No one has had as many adventures as you! Let us have supper here by all means, as we are invited." I was furious with the confounded fellow and his inopportune visit, but I could make no objection. . . . During supper *Mistriss* Macbell made no reference to my wedding in Saint-André, but described the Protestant ceremony in detail: minister, witnesses and the rest. However, I regarded this merely as the imprudence of a gossipy old woman, so I turned my attention to Miss Henriette and talked to her with the respectful tenderness she inspired in me, and she responded playfully. "Look, look at my niece!"

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*See note, page 291.

exclaimed Macbell to Deséry. "See how fond she is! How she loves him!" After supper I took Deséry to Loiseau's lodgings. I was furious with the aunt, whom I suspected of having been a bawd in London, but I disguised my feelings. On the way Deséry said to me, with that hateful, insulting snigger, which is characteristic of the young men of his town: "She's pretty enough, but I shall never believe that she's your wife! She is a Huguenot, and you are a Catholic; that is, unless you have changed?" "A Catholic is allowed to marry a Protestant," I answered, "especially if she be Anglican." "Oh, come now; that has not been permitted since the Revocation of the Edict of Nantes by Louis XIV!" "Yet it must be permissible, since it has happened; a parliamentary lawyer himself arranged the marriage in order to settle a disputed will in favour of my wife, and we are now on the point of gaining possession of the inheritance in question." We reached Loiseau's lodgings as I was speaking, and I introduced Deséry to him, mentioning that he had had supper with my wife. Loiseau, who knew the idiot well, looked at me expressively, saying: "And with Madame Macbell?" "I could not prevent it!" I answered in a whisper, and added aloud: "My friend, you will tell my cousin all that he should know. Perhaps he will be readier to believe you than me." "My cousin has been trying to persuade me that he has married a Huguenot!" babbled Deséry, with his intolerable snigger. Loiseau looked at me again and shrugged his shoulders. "Oh, so it isn't true," exclaimed Deséry. I was tempted to throw the blockhead into the street, he irritated me so; but Loiseau showed him his bed, saying: "My friend is properly and legally married, Monsieur Deséry. Let us change the subject." But at this the pestilential fellow turned serious, and begged Loiseau to give him details: "I am aware, Monsieur Deséry," answered my friend, "that to ask you to be discreet is to ask the impossible. I know the facts, and have told you that my friend is legally married. It is absolutely useless for you to know more." And with these words he left him in the closet where he was to sleep.

As we walked home, Loiseau asked me to explain my singular imprudence in introducing Macbell to one of my provincial relatives. I told him how it had happened and every thing that Macbell had said, without omitting a single word. "The harm is even greater than I thought," he answered. "That chatterbox will weave incredible tales from what Macbell has told him!" "And the world is so full of obliging people," I added, "who fall over each other in their anxiety to say where you live and where you are to be found when you come home. But there is more malice than kindness about it." "I cannot understand Madame Macbell's motive in talking like that to one of your relatives, who has just come from the very bosom of your family! This woman is not straight. I suspect her of underhand designs. I shall talk to Deséry again, bearing in mind what you have just told me."

I was somewhat of his opinion, but I had weathered more grievous mishaps and so trusted in my good luck. Also I reckoned, and I think with reason, that Henriette would be safe from her aunt's insinuations now that she was surrounded by honest friends of both sexes; and that, when they saw her, my parents would love her as much as Mlle Fanchette, than whom she was even fairer. . . So I was not disturbed, at least externally.

Deséry only stayed a week in Paris. On his return to Burgundy he made it his first business to visit my father and to give him a distorted version, not so much of what he had heard, as of what he had imagined: *that I had married an English girl, who used to be a prostitute* (misconstruing a remark made in his presence by Zoé, which probably referred to Zéphire or

Manon); *that I was living in furnished lodgings with her and with her aunt; that I had abjured Catholicism, in order to marry an Englishwoman without the consent of either of my parents; that my friends had known nothing of the marriage and were very much vexed about it, refusing to have anything more to do with me,* and so on. . . . The indignation of my estimable father, full of honour and piety, was kindled by this slanderous report! He wrote me a terrible letter! But he spoke of the incident to no one except to my mother, who had been present during the traitor's visit, and was especially careful that my brothers of Courgis should hear nothing about it! What they learned later, they learned from myself.

My father's letter arrived at our lodgings while I was at work, and was opened by *Mistriss* Macbell. She read it to her niece, with every evidence of alarm, and pointed out that my father was going to appeal against the marriage and rouse the disappointed heirs against her. "Luckily all the money is in my wallet," she added, "and with the help of Mylord Taaff we can slip out of the country. . . . You would not have been happy with that man. His father speaks against the English in his letter, and threatens *to curse his son if he does not give up a lost woman* (that is you) *for whom,* the old fellow has heard, *your husband has sacrificed his religion*; *though* (as he says) *he can scarcely believe this of one who has wilfully thrown away so many honourable and advantageous opportunities!*" The timid girl was thoroughly frightened by Macbell's comments on this letter; she dreaded poverty, and was perhaps already more than half tempted by the brilliant prospects held out to her by "Taaff," who was the son of a rich merchant of the city of London, though he called himself Mylord in Paris. The aunt and Mylord, who had been working in collusion for some time, formed a plot to abandon me and leave France; they made all arrangements, and finally persuaded my wife to fall in with their plans, by convincing her that, if she stayed behind alone with me, my parents would have her arrested and locked up within four walls, for having profaned the sacraments of their Church.

Nothing was said to me when I came home. I was given my letter which had been closed up again. It came as a thunderbolt! Henriette questioned me fondly – for I cannot believe that she was insincere at her age; a base and corrupt Irishwoman had abused her inexperience. I told her that everything would fall out to our mutual advantage in the end, as I knew my parents; but Macbell and Mylord solved the problem in a more expeditious manner.

I found out afterwards that Mylord's money had arranged matters at the Church. Of the marriage certificates and other deeds preceding these, my copy was written on a top sheet, and the others were written on sheets lying under this, so that when the priest (bribed by Mylord's guineas) had removed them, the entries in the two registers bore the true signatures of the witnesses, whereas in mine the names were false. . . .

The day after their arrangements were completed (4th April, 1759), I did not come home for dinner until three o'clock, as they had told me that they were going out and would not be in before that hour. I was vaguely troubled, because during the two previous nights Henriette had wept in her sleep, and when I had asked her what was the matter, her only answer had been to thank me for having wakened her. Also, both she and her aunt had been dressed before I left that morning, and when my wife kissed me as usual before I went out, she had held me to her heart and clasped me in her arms, with a stifled sigh and tear-filled eyes. . . . And as I went downstairs, I had heard her aunt saying: "But you can see that it is the only way?" I had been tempted to return within the hour, burning to see Henriette again. . . . As I was hastening towards the stairs, the landlady's daughter called me back: "Wait, wait a minute! Your wife and her aunt have not come in yet, and I still have the key; they gave it to me when they went out at six this morning." I went upstairs trembling. . . . I opened the door! . . . I had confided everything that I possessed to Henriette: all Zéphire's money, which my friends had forced me to keep, all her jewels which I was holding in trust for her daughter; together with a bond for a thousand crowns which Suadèle had given me and which her sisters had so far refused to take back; in all a sum of more than fifteen thousand livres. I entered the room; I could see neither boxes nor trunks. I was vaguely anxious, but the terrible light of truth had not yet flashed upon me! . . . I opened all the cupboards and closets. Everything was empty! I cried aloud. . . . But perhaps they had changed their lodgings and furnished a house in accordance with our income, to give me a pleasant surprise. . . . In the midst of these speculations, I glanced at the bed. A sealed letter was lying on it; I snatched it up; it was addressed in an unknown writing *To Monsieur Nicolas, here.* I opened it and found this letter in the same writing:

> MONSIEUR!
>
> *Our marriage is at an end. I find I cannot stay with you any longer, and am returning to my own country with my dear aunt, who is still wishful to act as a mother to me. Farewell, Monsieur. Forget me as I shall forget you, and set your father's mind at rest.*
>
> HENRIETTE KIRCHER.

The aunt's postscript:

> *My poor French, I only gave you my Niece in order to get the inheritance and to make her a Frenchman's widow as soon as possible. You are losing her while still alive; but we have your property. May you die of rage and despair! It will make one enemy the less for my country.*

I recognised the writing of the postscript as Macbell's, but the letter was not in Henriette's writing nor in her style. . . . And the aunt was incapable of such grammatical French. . . . I ran downstairs in a frenzy, and asked who had been with my wife and her aunt when they went out. "They were alone," answered the landlady's daughter. "*Mistriss* asked me to take a message for her, and I met her on my way back with your wife and that Mylord. It looked as if your wife did not want to go with them, for she was weeping, and saying: "But I do not want to! At least give him back what is his.' 'He shall have it back,' replied her aunt, 'we are only taking it to prevent him from following . . .' I did not hear any more." "But the trunks! Did you see them being carried away?" "Why no. That must have been done while I was out. *Mistriss* sent me to the *Rue Grands-Augustins*, to tell Mylord's servant to see that the two chaises were in the *Rue Christine*. . . . I met your friends half way down the Rue de Savoie, and gave them a good scolding for having left the house to look after itself. . . . Your wife wanted to say something to me, but they would not let her. There's some hanky-panky here! . . . And Mother was called away at five o'clock this morning because my sister was brought to bed, so she was not in either." I listened dumbfounded; I was incapable of recovering from my surprise! . . . As I was going upstairs again, the landlady came back. "They have gone," exclaimed her daughter, "and the young man knows absolutely nothing about it!" "He knows nothing about it!" "And Miss Henriette has been crying every day since last Sunday!" "That aunt is a twister, I have suspected it for a long time! And her Mylord is a rogue too. . . . I have been taken in! How vexed I am that I did not send for Mademoiselle's husband on Monday, when they made all that uproar! She means to give her niece to that man." I went on upstairs, as I realised that the landlady would be coming to interview me. . . . Back in our room, I looked for my money, my linen . . . nothing! The baseness of Macbell moved me to a frenzy of indignation; I shook with rage and grief. . . . The landlady came in and opened a cupboard in the wall, which was so exactly fitted to the panelling that it was almost imperceptible, and therein I found my clothes and linen, and a letter. "Let me see!" I exclaimed:

> *My dearest husband,*
>
> *I am hiding your linen and your clothes in here, and all that I could save of your money. My Aunt hates you because you are French, and wanted to take away everything. She says that your father has annulled our marriage, and that he will arrest us if we do not fly. She has forced me to become the mistress of that coarse blackguard, Mylord Taaff, whom I cannot endure. I was on the staircase the other day when she thought I was with the landlady, and heard her say to him that she had only married me to a Frenchman because he had told her that his parents would make no fuss as long as his mistress was a married woman. I tried to see the lawyer, but it was impossible; and if I had said anything to you, you would have killed Taaff. . . . I am utterly wretched, and if our marriage had not been annulled I should run away from them, but as things are I could only bring misfortune upon you. I assure you that I am miserable at leaving, and shall miss you and those sweet women your friends – especially Zoé – with whom I could have been so happy! . . . Alas, I have nothing to look forward to but regrets, and I wish I had never come to France! . . .*
> *Your wife, and I hope for ever,*
>
> HENRIETTE.

"They have stolen away my wife against her will!" I exclaimed. The landlady said that she thought so too and that Macbell was a rogue. "She has stolen my money and my jewels," I continued, "and my Henriette has only been able to rescue a hundred crowns. Look!" "I looked the day before yesterday," said the landlady, "and all your things were there then. Your wife showed them to me herself. . . . I am going straight to the lawyer who arranged your marriage; it was I who recommended him to them." And she left the room. . . .

I took up the letter again. The signature was Henriette's, but the body of the letter was written by a public scribe, probably because she was afraid of being surprised. . . . I knew not what to think. . . . Yet I accepted this second letter, and believed that my Henriette was the victim of a deception and was still innocent and worthy of my respect.

I went in search of Loiseau, and took him to the deserted room. He read the two letters. "There is nothing to regret here," he said. "It is all just a dream you had." "But why did they give me Henriette, a virgin?" "I have no idea!" "They have stolen the money . . . and, damn them, the jewels. . . ." "That is why they gave her to you." "But they did not know." "I am lost. . . . For I do not in the least believe what Macbell says in that insulting postscript. That woman is false through and through, and I do not believe anything she says." We wandered in a labyrinth of conjecture. . . . Loiseau wrote to our friends, and invited them for Saturday evening, a fortnight to a day after his first introduction to Henriette. . . . He mentioned *my new misfortune* in his note, but only briefly.

We reached Zoé's lodgings at nine o'clock. Since I had discovered my misfortune, I had been plunged in profound depression! . . . I recalled all my former losses, and the "privileged being" of only a fortnight before gave place to a creature accursed, scorned, disgraced, deserted. . . . I mourned for Colette, Zéphire and Suadèle; I thought of Julie Barbier, Jeannette Rousseau, Marie-Jeanne, Madelon Baron, Colombe, Marianne Tangis, Toinette, Jeannette Demailly, Adélaïde, Septimanie, Guéant. . . . My friends of both sexes tried to comfort me by saying all that could be said, not against Henriette whom they had loved, but against the infamous

Macbell. . . . "Grieve for Henriette by all means," they said, "for she was charming! She won our hearts as well as yours, but that woman was the ruin of her!" "But why, why try to comfort me for one who has deserted me," I exclaimed. "Comfort me rather for those who would never have abandoned me! . . . O Zéphire, O Suadèle, O Colette! It is for you, and you only that I mourn!" Loiseau embraced me, saying: "He knows better how to comfort himself than we do!" "But I am sorry for Henriette," I added, "for she was meant to be a virtuous wife . . . and I curse Macbell! . . . Ah, give me back Zéphire! Give me back Suadèle! And I shall have nothing to regret!" They understood my mood from these words, and listened silently while I passed all my irreparable losses in review. . . . Zoé used the one means to calm my grief; she talked about Éléonore, who was so sensible already that she could have been a comfort to me, and pressed me gently to relate the story of my connection with her mother. . . . I was caught in this cunning trap laid by the hand of friendship, and told the story of Marguerite Pâris and myself as it is related in the Third Epoch. Everyone was very much touched by it, and especially by our last farewells under the Saint-Gervais archway; also they marvelled at the variety and precocity of my adventures. I must add that Zoé had only to express a wish for me to satisfy it; she was extremely dear to me, and I was never completely happy with Henriette until she had won Zoé's affection. For this celestial creature had loved my Zéphire and my Suadèle, and had given me my Éléonore; and I always seemed to see her struggling with her tears, when she was hiding my dead Zéphire from me! They persuaded me to stay with Bonne Sellier, who welcomed me with delight; so that I never heard what the lawyer said to my landlady of the Rue Pavée on receipt of her news. . . .

Thus ended my second marriage, counting my adventure with Madeleine Baron as the first. Some time afterwards I discovered the whole Macbell plot, from the French servant who had been with Mylord (so called) in Paris.

Macbell was an Irishwoman from Kilkenny. Her sister, who was extremely beautiful, as are nearly all the girls of that county, was the wife of a London watchmaker whose father, an Englishman, had married a French woman whom he had met and loved in Paris. Henriette's mother had died young, and her father took his sister-in-law to live with him and bring up his daughter. This woman was older than her sister and born of a different mother; she had been in service in London, and was as ugly and wicked as her younger sister was good and beautiful. When Henriette was twelve or thirteen years old, her father died, and within three or four years Macbell had dissipated all the money that had been left to her ward. She then had recourse to various expedients. She decided to find a man to keep her niece. Monsieur Taaff saw Henriette, was attracted by her, and made the aunt an extremely good offer. But Henriette, who was by nature virtuous, would not consent to anything save marriage. Taaff was sufficiently in love to agree to this; but, besides a father who was by no means disinterested, he had a strict and powerful elder brother, who would never permit him to wed with an inferior, nor even to keep a marriageable mistress. The aunt herself, as go-between, would have been exposed to considerable risks. They thought things out. . . . Taaff suggested that a visit to Paris might make Miss Henriette more amenable, and they looked about for a pretext. . . . Their minds turned to the grandmother, and without knowing whether her mother was living or dead, they departed to claim her property. . . . Taaff went ahead and prepared the way, paying everything in advance at the inns, but never letting the niece see him, and he found them lodgings in Paris with a woman devoted to his interests. . . . "You offered, just as they were at their wits' end as to what to do with Miss Henriette who, having partly seen through her aunt's plans, refused to marry a Frenchman. . . . Apparently however you attracted her. The great-grandmother was dead, and they lodged their claim, but without the slightest hope at first of being adjudged the heirs. It is said that you won their case for them, and Miss Henriette thought that, for this reason, her marriage would hold good. Moreover she loved you, which enraged Mylord. At last, having obtained his brother's permission to take a Frenchman's wife for mistress, Mylord sent for a distant cousin of yours whom he had met on a previous visit, brought him to Paris, and told him what to do. It was he who frightened Henriette, as much for you as for herself. Afterwards he made it his business to alarm your parents for their honour. Their letter, and still more so one from Deséry saying that your father was coming to Paris, frightened Henriette into letting herself be taken away; though it was much against her will, for she wept bitterly! Oh, how she wept! . . . And when she could not find your money or your jewels, she cried and screamed; but they soothed her by promising that everything should be returned to you. In spite of this she hid a hundred crowns of her own money in your linen, which she had compelled her aunt to leave behind. It is obvious that the landlady must have heard her screams, and that if she had been an honest woman, she would have warned you. But do not expect to see your money or your jewels again! Macbell told me that it was not too much for a dog of a Frenchman to pay for having slept with her niece. . . . When they reached London, Monsieur Taaff hired an apartment for the two women, and Henriette called herself Madame Restifsh, describing herself as an

Englishwoman married to a Frenchman who had deserted her, while Macbell posed as her virtuous but equally unfortunate aunt, who had devoted her life to her niece."

Such is the story that Taaff's French servant told me on his return from London. In favour of this version of the part played by Henriette, I may add that this servant was not allowed to approach her, as he was being sent back to his own country.

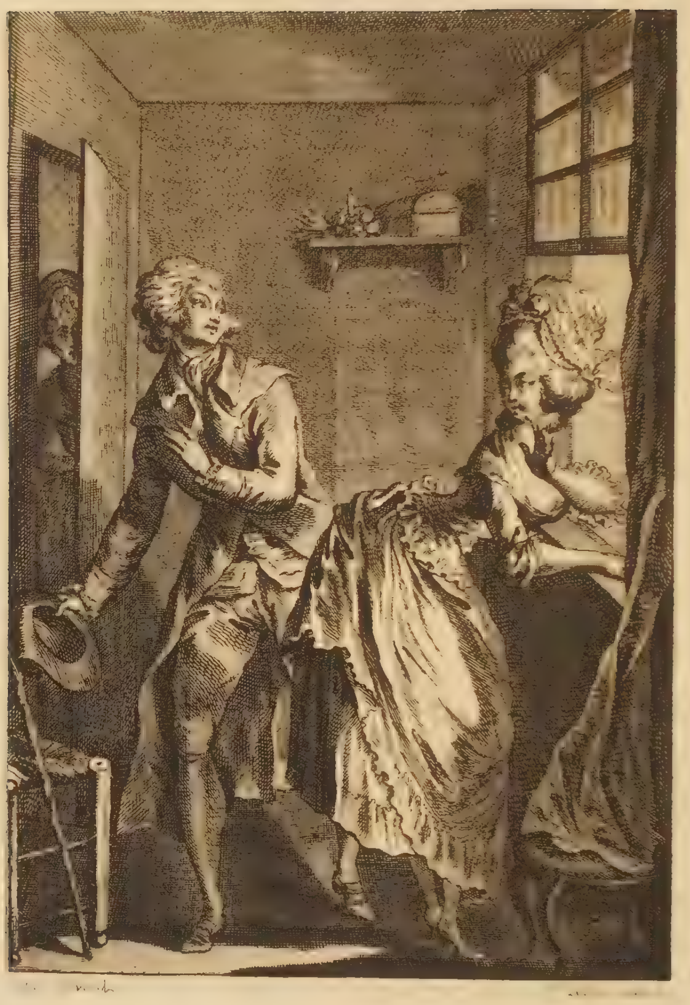
Finally, several years later, when I was at my lowest ebb, I learned through the same servant, who had been again in London, that, at the end of December 1759, Henriette had been brought to bed of twins, who had been baptised in the names Henriette and Charlotte, legitimate daughters of Nicolas-Anne-Edme-Augustin-Restifsh, of French nationality, husband of Henriette Kircher, residing in Piccadilly, London, in the Parish of, etc. I also heard that M. Taaff's father and elder brother had tried to estrange him from Henriette, and that he had only managed to pacify them by showing them the entry in the Register of Births and vouching for my existence. . . . Both the children lived, and in 1768, nine years after Henriette's departure, I met a M. Powell, a Plymouth printer, in the Rue Quincampoix, Paris, and he gave me news of them. This Englishman, who helped me to prepare my *Confidence Nécessaire*, told me that both the children were pretty, especially Henriette, the elder one. Their mother (he continued) had suffered much from M. Taaff, who had become a profligate; it was said that he had killed *Mistriss* Macbell for suggesting that her niece should take another man. However, after the death of his father and brother, he had married her, and, as she had no children by him, he adopted her daughters by her first husband. I have heard nothing since about this part of my family, but have often longed that I could go to

London! . . . My last two letters to M. Powell were never answered, perhaps because he is dead. . . .*Æternum vale! Erica!*

After three such cruel shocks following one upon the other, I sank into a stupor. . . . But Zoé was my neighbour, and Bonne Sellier lavished a mother's cares upon me. Finally, the fate which dogged me was the means of rousing me and giving a new direction to my thoughts. I noticed that Mlle Zoé seemed sad and anxious, and questioned her: "What is the matter with my last remaining friend?" "Dear Nicolas, come and see your Éléonore. . . . She is ill. . . ." I shuddered. "Am I to lose everything?" I followed Zoé. Éléonore had the smallpox, and we very nearly lost her; I was allowed to visit her because all hope had been abandoned. I nursed her for forty-eight hours on end, and when I left her she was much better. Had it not been for me, the too strict diet ordered by the doctor would have killed her. . . . The anguish I endured, thinking that this darling daughter was going to die in my arms, swamped every other care, and could only be measured by my joy when I saw her safely on the way to convalescence and saved from disfigurement by Zoé's nursing! Éléonore recovered completely, and I was again forbidden to see her; her guardian was in some sort jealous of me, and also a scene I had with the doctor may have influenced her against me. After I had saved my daughter from death, I overheard this man prescribing his old treatment. Flying down the staircase after him, I cried: "Murderer, if your treatment had been followed, my daughter would have died! It was I who saved her; she was dying of hunger! You made her fast, when it was only necessary to save her from indigestion!" "Who is this man?" he asked. Zoé tried to soothe him, but he complained about me some days later, and I met with a bad reception. . . . I detest these ignorant, hide-bound doctors. They are in truth murderers. . . . O my so much persecuted friend Préval, you were not like that! You comforted and nourished your invalids! . . .

The pain I suffered on being exiled from my daughter's presence was so intense that depression again laid hold upon my spirits and nothing seemed able to rouse me from my stupor. Loiseau saw that something out of the ordinary was needed to shake me out of this state; so he wrote to my father, describing my condition and even confiding some part of what concerned Zéphire, begging him to burn the letter after he had read it. My father readily forgave me, and retracted the sort of curse he had laid upon me when misinformed by Deséry, and it was Loiseau who joyfully brought me the good news. I was not unmoved by it, and this partial success led Loiseau, Zoé, Boudard, Renaud, Gaudet and their sweethearts to urge me to spend a part of the summer in my native place. I had no will either way, and allowed myself to be guided. . . . Even now, my Reader, and in spite of all that I have said about him, you do not yet know Loiseau, this prince of friends, nor his Zoé, grown through him into one of Nature's masterpieces. Their conduct to me at this time would best portray them to you; but who will give me tongue to depict my saviour god! A mother's tender cares for her beloved son; the bride's for a husband whom death threatens to harvest during the first months of their union; a mother's for the father and sole support of her nurselings, such cares as these could scarcely be compared with his.

During these days of spiritual deadness the hundred crowns, which was all that Henriette had left me of my money, was quickly spent. One day at dinner I showed an inclination to go to the theatre. Zoé answered smiling that it was a good idea, and explained that she could not go with me on account of her pupils. . . . Then she left the room for a moment, to re-enter gaily with six francs, which she slipped into my hand, saying: "You have no money; choose the place you like best." I made no difficulty about taking the money, not knowing that my friends had had to pay out a sum that morning which had left them almost penniless. Zoé went back to her work and I went out; but I only spent a franc, and gave the rest back to my friend. I noticed, in the days that followed, that she was no longer wearing a very pretty lace neckerchief, which everyone admired for the fineness of its workmanship, and of which several of the neighbours, among others Isabelle Lefaucheux who lived opposite her on the third floor, were very envious. I asked what had become of it. "I made a present of it to some one." "Really? I am sorry! It suited you so well." "Good; then I have all the more satisfaction in my gift." Some days later I saw Isabelle wearing it. I did not at once jump to the truth, but I overheard a conversation which completely enlightened me. *Zoé*: So our dear Nicolas is really well again. *Loiseau*: Yes, dear friend, and I am overjoyed by it. *Zoé*: My God, what a lot of trouble you have had! *Loiseau*: I? Less than you! *Zoé*: I should have to be blind or unjust to agree to that. *Loiseau*: Very well, my sweet Zoé, you have done less than I: I will admit it if you like; but, my darling, everything that I do for that dear man is a pleasure; you have not the same interest in friend Nicolas as I have. *Zoé*: You love him . . . and you think that I can be only slightly interested in him? *Loiseau*: Slightly! Oh no, you are too generous for that! *Zoé*: It is only that I am clear-sighted, and look for happiness where it is to be found. *Loiseau*: Ah, dear friend! Yes, you are clear-sighted: that is the word. . . . If he only knew all that you have done for him he . . . would adore you. *Zoé*: He does adore me. *Loiseau*: What does that mean? Not that I am surprised. . . . *Zoé*: You seem disturbed. *Loiseau*: No, no, really. . . . He loves you! *Zoé*: Certainly he loves me. . . . He would be very ungrateful. . . . What would you do if . . .? *Loiseau*: What would I do if he loved you? . . . Ah, Zoé, I can see it in your eyes, you are testing me! . . . *Zoé*: Very well then, he loves me, he loves me. . . . He tells me so every day, and . . . *Loiseau*: And? *Zoé*: I respond to his affection. *Loiseau*: Then you must think very poorly of me if you believe me incapable of sacrificing my happiness to that of my friend. . . . Ah, Zoé, you would be the most to blame if anyone were. . . . Is not my friend the dearest part of myself? *Zoé*: My friend, I only wanted to test the compass of that magnanimity for which I so much honour you. . . . It is through your lips that he tells me every day how he adores me; you are so perfectly united that there is but one of you between the two; but, of that one, I only say to you *I love you*. . . . So you would have given me up to him? *Loiseau*: Yes, if you loved him. *Zoé*: Let us be serious: he loves me, but only as a sister; and he is so intensely grateful that I would not for the world have him know everything! *Loiseau* (overjoyed): O my dear and good friend! How happy I am! All those I love, love each other too, and in the most honourable fashion! Good Zoé, most excellent girl! How dear you are to me! . . . No, he must never know everything; but it was your neckerchief that touched me most nearly. I was thinking out ways to satisfy our friend when he wanted to go to the theatre, and I had found one; but your sex is always quicker than mine to do good, and you got ahead of me. *Zoé*: You are always saying that you are in your friend's debt for the pleasure he has given you by accepting your services; well, I have the same feeling. If you only knew the pleasure it is to me to see my neckerchief on Mlle Lefaucheux! Ah, God, why does not everyone give these joys a trial? You taught them to me, and it is the dearest of all the proofs that you have given me of your esteem.



On this I entered. I was well-nigh choking with joy and gratitude, but I kept my secret and embraced the virtuous couple without unburdening my mind. My strength had now completely returned, so I put off my departure until the 1st of May, and devoted all of it to earning as much as I could for the household. I had to do with people upon whom not the slightest effort was lost; they noticed what I was doing, and Loiseau was enraptured; he rejoiced over it with Zoé. "He is not ungrateful!" he said. "Ah, the money is nothing, my dear life; it is the heart, the heart that counts!"

Here I will pause for a moment, as certain incidents indirectly brought about by Zoé call to mind others of the same kind, which I have omitted because they would have broken the thread of my narrative, or delayed it. So I will introduce them here, in order and with the dates of their occurrence, adding thereto three or four little poems which, with the songs to Zéphire, were my only verse compositions during my second residence in Paris. The last poem was not finished until the 9th of May at Sacy.

The first of these poems, written on the 3rd of April, 1757, was addressed to Thérèse, the pretty, kindly chambermaid of Mme Courbuisson, the fair pastrycook. I was suffering at the time from the effects of Mlle Camargo's favours. One Sunday, as I was going upstairs shortly after dinner, I caught sight of Thérèse in her closet; she blew me a kiss and I returned it. Then she uncovered her breasts and displayed them naked. . . . I was deeply distressed by my impotence, but I could do nothing for her in my melancholy condition. . . . I tried to explain this by signs; but Thérèse took these in the opposite sense, and responded by adopting still more voluptuous poses. However, little Pèlerine Berthé, who was just behind me, studied my gestures, and I thought I heard her mutter: "Quite right! quite right!" I went on up to my room, and wrote the following to Thérèse :

> *Shall I still hide from you the source whence flow my ills, O my so sweet Aminta? Shall I strive to pretend a soul at ease, so as not to invite your pity? No, for that ready and tender nature which frankly soothed my pains aforetime, would make you wish to know how this efflux came upon me.*
>
> *To tell you my wretchedness, O object of my love and most dear confidant, know that my misfortunes began when you, imprudent girl, started to share your favours. From that fatal moment, I substituted so many infamous drabs for you, that the fruit of them stays with me still: a* palc *and two great* seobub.
>
> *But what shall I do about it, my ardent young friend, and how shall I issue from this state, in which I see nothing but pain and shame and disgrace? If you will not deign to restore my right to your confidence, I feel only too surely that my body will run away with me. On the other hand, your appetising delights, Aminta, will be my protection against the virus.*

The verses are bad and a trifle licentious considering my bodily condition; and at the end of the second strophe, I slander myself by exaggerating my ill. I did not take them to Thérèse until next morning, when I found her with Bonne Sellier who was telling her that I was ill. "But what is the matter with him?" Thérèse kept on asking. . . . I came into the room and gave her my poem, saying: "Here you are: read this." She read it on the spot and, grasping immediately the sense of the words I had written backwards, she burst out laughing. . . . "It is not quite so bad as that," I told her, and asked her to verify this for herself. She examined me exhaustively, satisfying herself as to what I had not got, and pitying me sincerely for what I had. Also she tended me with enthusiasm, so that I had two people at work on me during this illness and was nearly killed between them, because each thought themselves the only person treating me. . . . It was often Thérèse who made my tisanes and my vegetable soups;

and when ointments had to be lightly rubbed into the skin, she used to bring the stove into my room and remain there during the operation; and frequently hers was the gentle hand to massage me. Still she was not the one to harvest the first fruits of my cure, for I would not risk her health. Pèlerine Berthé had the benefit of this, and then not by my wish; she almost forced me to it. . . . I will describe this incident as a useful lesson to young girls who permit men to caress them too freely.

Prolonged continence had made me very ardent. One holiday, when I had left my room door open, Pèlerine came in, and, as I had already had her, I dallied with her very freely. We were absolutely alone on our floor, and probably in the house, for the weather was fine. We carried our dalliance to great lengths, but I wanted to go no further. Pretty Berthé's eyes were sparkling; fire was coursing through my veins: I kissed her. . . . I clasped her to me. . . . I went even further. . . . Then, feeling that I was no longer master of myself, an instinct of delicacy brought me to a halt. I warned the girl, and told her that it would be her undoing; but either she did not understand the significance of what I said, or else desire had passed beyond control. "What! Are you going to leave me in this state?" she cried. "No. . . . No. . . . You cannot do that! . . ." I was obliged to satisfy her; for she held me so tightly that I could not easily have got free of her. . . . Luckily I was cured! . . . I asked the child every day how she was, and even examined her myself. At last I knew for certain that I was no longer contagious; and this made me bolder with Thérèse.

Returning in the afternoon one holiday, I saw Thérèse at her window on the courtyard, talking to Bonne who was on the fourth floor. Thérèse was looking up at Bonne and I could not be sure whether she noticed me, but her eyes were as sharp as a crow's. The door was not latched,* so I entered softly and, approaching her plump buttocks, murmured:

It is a lover who
Now fond and leal
Watches for you
Intent to steal
A kiss. . . .

She made no effort to change her position whatever I did; she only smiled slyly and went on with her conversation. So I made my arrangements, and, drawing the curtain over her back, I sought pleasure, and found it. Thérèse talked on, then checked and gasped . . . and so palpably lost the thread of her discourse that Bonne Sellier, who had not the least suspicion, burst out laughing, and twice exclaimed: "What on earth are you talking about, Mam'selle Thérèse?" I shall only mention one other encounter with her, and that in its proper place. . . . Let us go back for a moment to Loiseau and Zoé.

While awaiting my departure, we three lived together in a sweet intimacy which nothing could affect. Zoé showed herself equally tender to us both, and my friend could not have respected her more than I did. However I had to control myself at times, as I often caught myself feeling somewhat too tenderly towards her. Living together as we were (for we all boarded with Bonne) I often saw her in undress. . . . She was always charming, as we know, but she was more voluptuously so in her easy house attire than when dressed up, because she had exquisite taste, beautiful eyes and an enchanting smile. . . . I could hardly contain myself when I saw her so, and then Zoé, noticing that I seemed sad and thoughtful, would try to comfort me, sometimes even going so far as to kiss me,

*See *Paysan-Paysanne pervertis*, plate 97.

and fondle me with innocent little childish endearments which no one could resist. . . . I had never returned her kisses, but at last one day I kissed her on the lips. A fire . . . I shuddered . . . I got up, not knowing what I did and went out, not to return until I was certain Loiseau would be home. . . . I found them both very anxious. Zoé had frightened Loiseau by describing my abrupt departure, not understanding the reason for it. They ran up to me, caressing and making much of me. "Stop, my friends," I said. "It was no new grief, nor yet the old ones too vividly refelt, which drove me to take flight: it was another emotion, to which I must confess in accordance with our agreement to tell each other everything. It was Zoé who made me tremble! And I ask her, in mercy, to treat me as distantly as she would a stranger. . . . A little while ago . . . I was forced to fly: my senses battling against my virtue caused a fearful tempest in me . . . Listen, dear friends; I have to make a journey. Let me go."

Loiseau listened with absorbed attention, while Zoé kept her beautiful eyes on the ground. Seeing that I had stopped speaking of my own accord, they began to caress me even more tenderly than before. . . . Then Loiseau exclaimed:

Heu! quoties actum Furiis Agamemnone Natum
Dixisse in Pyladem verba proterva putas?
Nec procul a vero est quod vel pulsarit amicum:
*Mansit in officiis non minus ille suis.**

"What do you expect us to say, my friend?" he continued. "We do not love you any the less because you have eyes, a heart and senses. . . . They are the gift of Nature. . . . Certainly there is a decency; and modesty, reserve and self-control are not mere prejudices. . . . Let us consider, in the

*Ovid, *Trist.*

cold light of reason and as though it concerned others than ourselves, the consequences of anything that might happen. Supposing that you had yielded to Nature's prompting, you would have tried to overcome Zoé's modesty. But it is by no means certain that you would have succeeded, for Zoé's mind was calm, and she would no doubt have spoken in a way that would have impressed you. However I admit that, when one has once attacked a woman, that in itself is an incentive to try again. Still, her refusal would have mortified you, and a certain shame would have hidden a corner of your heart from us. You would have been afraid of me, or at least of my presence. . . . Now let us suppose that you were successful. I believe you would have told me; but could you have told me without pain? I think not, not in either case. Then why take a tortuous and deceitful way, and one sown with thorns, to reach your goal, when there is a more certain, more agreeable one, which I have already suggested. I adore Zoé; to me her heart is a treasure beyond price: but it is her own. Let her speak! There is no question of taking it from me; it would still be mine. I feel capable of this sacrifice, and I am, I think, the strongest of us three. I can vouch for myself, neither to profane love nor transform our mutual tenderness into a debauch, which none of us would dare confess to others and of which we would be ashamed among ourselves. That is my proposition."

"And I do not object to it because Monsieur Nicolas is married," answered Zoé. "A marriage such as his does not fulfil the object of that institution; it is null. I have only one objection that I can say aloud, and that is that I should not make him happy for two reasons: firstly because he could only share my heart; and secondly because his pleasure would at the least be troubled by the thought of his friend's sacrifice. . . . Therefore I absolutely refuse to accept Monsieur Loiseau's generosity." "Ah Zoé," I exclaimed, "I could not have accepted it either! I could not have allowed a weakling, a man incapable of mastering his passions, to occupy your heart and arms in place of the most virtuous of men! Let me depart. . . ." *Loiseau, with tears in his eyes*: "Oh, sweet and cruel passion, which can trouble the most charming union that ever was in the world! We to part! . . . Never, I will not consent." *Monsieur Nicolas*: "It will only be for a very short time." *Loiseau, quickly*: "Then why do I shudder at the thought? . . ." *Zoé*: "Do not let us separate. If our friend will consent, I know a way of making us all happy, a way which occurred to me some time ago; but my respect for his semblance of a marriage prevented me from suggesting it. And yet our wise guide would not have disapproved. . . . Bonne Sellier has a charming sister in easy circumstances . . ." *Loiseau, interrupting her*: "My dear, time changes circumstances! A spontaneous passion such as you might inspire would have made me ready to overstep the common limits; but it would not be right to try to bring a new one to birth. . . . However the danger is not so urgent that our friend is forced to run away in a hurry. Let us take time, and put off a grievous privation as long as possible. O Zéphire, O Suadèle! How fatal was your loss to us!"

After this conversation I tacitly made up my mind to seek dissipation, abusing one of Madame Parangon's old-time lessons. Instead of following Zoé's suggestion and turning my attention to Bonne Sellier's sister, the attractive *Sophronie-Françoise*, of whom, unfortunately, I had retained no impression, I went in search of Pèlerine Berthé, who was living at this time on a second floor in the *Rue de la Bucherie*. There I found her living in some degree of comfort, and so much prettier and so white of skin that I was quite astonished. But I could obtain nothing from her, not even marriage: she was completely in love with her dear *Ramponneau*, and was moreover most carefully watched by her mother, whom Guillaume had won to his interests.

So I fell back on Thérèse, who was always kind and was not too sensitive. A little slap on her backside drew her attention to me: "Aha! So he has come to life again!" And her coral lips together with the sweet organ of speech clung to mine in a luscious kiss. "Is anyone about?" I asked. "Yes, but I will come to your room in a moment." She did not fail me. . . . Too easily won happiness!

Opposite Knapen's printing works and between the Café *Dauphin* and *Forget's* wine shop, lived an exceedingly pretty little salt-peddler of about twelve or thirteen years old, the daughter of a street-porter's second wife. The thought of marrying the child at this age and developing her mind greatly attracted me, but the mother took me for a rake and showed me the door. She was wrong; my intentions were honest. I would have handed over little *Eusébie Gomand* to Mlle Zoé, who would have undertaken her education, and afterwards placed her with Victorine to learn millinery. I should have been settled in life; I should have kept Zoé, and avoided all the misfortunes that were to assail me. . . . Gomand had a daughter by his first wife, whom Eusébie's mother had driven from the house. (I did not know what follows until seven or eight years later.) This elder girl, Eulalie, was exceedingly pretty. She found a place with a dressmaker in the *Rue Ogniard*, and while there attracted the attention of a wholesale grocer at the bottom of the Rue Cinq Diamants, who seduced her. Her stepmother published her shame throughout the quarter, so that when she entered it she was reviled by all the women fruit vendors of the Place du Pont; and when her father came home, he ill-treated her. Eulalie was exasperated, and determined to be revenged. . . . When her sour temper had alienated her seducer, she became a public woman; then she pointed out her sister to a wealthy lecher and sold him her virginity, promising to deliver her into his hands if he would help. To achieve this end and humiliate her stepmother as much as possible, she persuaded the recruiting officers on the bridge to make her sister the centre of a scandalous scene, or, in her own words, to warm her up a bit; and the officers were not backward. Deeply distressed, Eusébie dared not return to the salt stall, and it was then that Eulalie, who had been keeping a look out from a friend's room in the Rue de l'Hirondelle, caught sight of her leaving the house alone and called to her. She painted the pleasures, the amusements and fine toilets which, with her pretty face, awaited her, in such vivid colours that Eusébie was tempted. "Do not decide at once. Say that you are going to visit our aunt Gomand, the mercer on the Boulevards, and I will take you to the Play; then you will see!" "But I am not dressed." "That is all right; you can have one of my tight fitting dresses." So she had Eusébie's hair dressed and clothed her, and the child looked ravishing. Eulalie took her to Nicolet's, where she was admired and made much of.... She thoroughly enjoyed the play, and was still intoxicated with the pleasure of it as they went home. . . . They had a dainty supper at a restaurant, paid for by Eulalie's client. . . . The little girl grieved to unmake her hair and part with her fine feathers. "Then stay with me, stupid!" said Eulalie. "If you will stay with me you will always look like that, and have the theatre into the bargain!" The man was delighted, and proposed going to the play again that night. Now it was this that more than anything else had enchanted Eusébie; she lowered her pretty eyes: "You will do just as you are," said Eulalie kissing her. "Let us have some coffee and punch to fill in the time." They made the child drunk, and an Anacreontic gaiety suited her type to perfection. They went to the evening's performance merrily, and when it was over, there was more punch. The child was put to bed quite drunk, and the man lay down with her. Eusébie rose next morning, deflowered and all covered with blood. . . .* (For the end of the story of Eusébie and her sister see my *Calendar.* The index will be found at the end of my *Dernière Partie*, under 27-28 September.)

While regretting the loss of this child, I looked about for another adventure. One Sunday at three o'clock, when discontent and want of occupation took me home, I caught sight of a nymph in most seductive undress, issuing from a little room on the third floor which looked over the *Rue Galande.* (Mlle Zoé occupied an apartment on the same floor, looking over the *Rue des Trois Portes.*) It was Mlle Lefaucheux, the daughter of a very well-to-do foreman butcher. She was in the white costume of her trade, with silk stockings and pretty red morocco shoes; everything about her was of a cleanliness that roused desire. I saluted her, and my lips formed the words *Che boccone!*, but I dared not enter into conversation with her. I found Richecœur at Bonne Sellier's, and asked him about Isabelle. He told me that he knew her and was teaching her how to play the psaltery. I asked him to introduce me. "She is not a Thérèse," answered handsome Richecœur smiling. "I only want the pleasure of talking to her; introduce me as a man who talks well." "Oh, willingly . . . ," and he took me to see her at once. I visited her on each of the following days, but only when Richecœur went to give his lesson; and I got little satisfaction when circumstances or chance left me alone with Isabelle. Yet the charm she exercised upon my senses was enough to counterbalance Zoé. In a moment of emotion I wrote some verses to her, and she was

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*See the 122nd *Contemporaine.*

touched by them. She showed them to Richecœur, perhaps to know if I had written them myself, and he praised my talents, my discretion and my respect for women; he was so certain of her favour that he exceeded the truth. . . . Now on this 10th of April, 1795 (11th Germinal), it occurs to me that people will wonder: "How did he manage to have so many adventures? How did he win a favourable hearing from so many women whom he had barely seen?" Reader, I had but one passion, and sacrificed all others to it. My attitude to women was a flattering adoration; the happiness I demanded was no empty word, as it is in the mouth of fops; a woman really gave me the supreme felicity, and she saw this by my transports. *Ut ameris, amabilis esto*! says Ovid. Here are the lines inspired by Mlle Lefaucheux.

> *Seeking each day to find the road to happiness, I devoted all my attention to this quest and only wasted my walking; no doubt I sought happiness where it no longer was. I found it, Faucheux, when I saw your charms. . . .*

The rest was absolutely effaced by Agnès Couillard, and I can only with difficulty decipher, that I commend in her:

> *. . . a charming nature, a proud reserve which never relaxes. . . .*

for the less I hoped, the more I appeared to fear severity. . . . I gave these verses to her on Easter Sunday, and in spite of handsome Richecœur's security in his position, they won me an assignation in the Jardin des Plantes for the second holiday. There Isabelle gave me to understand that she was not free, because her marriage with a butcher of the *Rue Saint-Denis* had been arranged for more than a year. I acted despair. We went into the labyrinth (it was on the point of closing) by the little *Serrurerie* gate, and found ourselves absolutely alone. I wanted to pluck the rose, but that was impossible; she permitted everything else. I escorted the Beauty to within a hundred paces of our dwelling; then she went in alone, and I followed a few moments later.

When she heard me on the stairs, she opened her door. She was dressed in a white house frock. "I am alone," she said, "and I hear that no one will be in until eight o'clock. I have sent our servant to Evensong, so let us say our farewells; for we shall never meet again." I immediately shut the door upon us, and kissed my pretty neighbour, clasping her to my heart. She drew back, struggling. . . . A bed was just behind her, and this brought her to a halt. I threw her down on it. She made but a half-hearted resistance and I triumphed. I spared her nothing, but treated her like a town taken by assault. . . . I expected reproaches from this girl of nineteen; but no, these were the actual words she said to me: "I wanted to prove how highly I esteem you. You have had what no one else has ever had from me; and that because your verses touched my heart. They are the first that have ever been written to me. Besides, Madame Sellier never wearies of praising you, and I myself have complete confidence in your good faith. . . . Do not be afraid that Monsieur Richecœur will ever get as much! . . . I give you free permission to use any means you like to spy upon us, and to dishonour me if such a thing should occur. . . . I do not dislike my future husband, but for you I felt a special esteem even before we met. I knew that Éléonore and pretty Zéphire were your daughters . . . that is what decided me. . . . For it was not to-day that I resolved to do what we have done. Look at me; my younger sisters are not in the least like me, and I know why. I had to be told. And I resolved to do likewise. But as I like comfort, I am marrying for what money can give me. . . ." I vowed on my honour to respect her secret: "Nor will it be hard to keep my promise," I added, "as I am naturally discreet, especially . . . in affairs of love." This pleased her so much that she gave herself to me again, and this second favour was more delicious than the first, which had not been without its thorns. It was no part of her plan that I should beat the air, nor, like certain knowing innocents, did she want to do the thing by halves. . . . Afterwards we talked for a little with the door open. She repeated that it was our last meeting; and this made me beg for one more favour, which I won with difficulty. By then it was getting late and it was necessary to separate, at least partially. So we finished our conversation, Isabelle standing at her door and myself, on the landing. She gave me a box of bergamot and, a few days before my departure, I entrusted this to Éleonore to keep for me, and she showed it to me again in 1772. . . . Mlle Lefaucheux heard the servant coming upstairs. "Farewell," she said. I saw that her beautiful eyes were wet, and, seizing her hand, kissed it three times. Then I retired to my room.

I opened the box, and, under some sweets, I found a heart which she had woven herself out of her own hair, and a ring, also of her own hair, thrice inscribed with the word *Goodbye*. Also a little ribbon which, when unrolled, proved to be the favour she had worn about her neck on our walk together, of which I had said: *I would like to have it for a relic.* I kissed it with a tender emotion which made me realise that I could have become deeply attached to Isabelle if there had been time for the impression to sink in. . . .

To conclude this incident, which painfully distracted my mind from Zoé, I will add at once that I met Isabelle with her husband a short time after our farewell. I bowed respectfully, scarcely raising my eyes to her. The big butcher asked who I was. "A neighbour who lives in the same house as my father." "Is he your music master?" "No, his friend. He has written some poems." The butcher summoned me, with a polite salutation, so I turned back and walked the whole length of the *Rue de Seine-Saint-Victor* with the newly-married couple. As we were passing one of the University boarding-houses, the butcher said that there was someone in that house who owed him money, and left us, asking me to look after his wife until he had finished his business. . . . Directly we were alone, Isabelle said to me: "I am pregnant; my mother described the first symptoms to me. My husband has not yet penetrated, but he has tried to, and that is enough to satisfy him. My desire is fulfilled, for I have got what I wanted, and also I cannot sufficiently praise your behaviour since we parted; for I know everything that you say. No one could be more reserved and more obliging. I see now how well you deserved what I did for you in giving you my most precious possession." I took the bergamot box out of my pocket and kissed it two or three times. "I kiss it night and morning," I said, "and worship the giver!" "It really is my own hair, and I wove it myself for you when I had come to my decision; for workmen change the quality." "And the neck ribbon?" I asked. "It was the ribbon I wore that day: they are *my relics*." "I recognised it, Madame, and have kissed it a thousand times." "I am well-to-do now," continued Isabelle Lefaucheux. "I know myself, and I must be comfortable; but my heart, all my heart, belongs to you. . . ." Her husband appeared, and we were silent. They turned homewards, and I left them at the *Port-Saint-Bernard*, for fear of seeming too warmly attached to my fair neighbour. She appreciated my delicacy, and thanked me with a quick glance. I used to see her from time to time up to the year 1766. A daughter was the fruit of our intimacy, who married an architect in 1776; she now has a nineteen-year-old daughter of her own who has been three years married to a watchmaker.

Isabelle vividly recalled Marianne Tangis and I resolved, not to write to her, but to stop in Auxerre on my way home, and indirectly get news of her; then I would write or call, according to what I learnt. This consideration, combined with other and very painful ones, urged me to hasten my departure. It was during this period, and before my overflowing heart was dead to hope, that for the first and only time in my life, I addressed some verses to a man. They depict the state of my mind:

TO MY FRIEND LOISEAU

If pain and grief without a shadow of pleasure; if trivial joys and heavy sorrows can make this life desirable, then I am wrong, dear Loiseau, to loathe mine.

But if we only exist in order to live happily, I dare assert in my great torment that the death I seek is the supreme good for one whose heaven is all cloud.

If nothing in us survives and man has no other hope than to re-enter and be lost in inanimate matter before he begins his new career when, in the unchanging order, his turn comes again:

Or if the boasted soul survives to enjoy, as we are told, eternal happiness, why should we avoid and flee from this death which turns both Sage and Atheist to happy men?

Loiseau smiled when he read my verses, and praised them to Zoé and our friends as would a father, wishful to please a sick child.

In the state of flux wherein my too sweet, too short happiness with Isabelle had left me, I cast my eyes on every side. One day, from my window on the *Rue des Trois-Portes*, I saw a young person who looked charming and, admiring her, I wanted to see her closer. She was about eighteen, with small, irregular features; a typical Parisian. I persuaded Bonne to sound her on my behalf (for I was really almost mad for want of a woman) and then called on her myself. I found a pleasure-loving little person, who needed a rich man. I slipped some verses into her hand the same evening, and although they were not addressed to her by name, they were none the less about her.

TO MLLE JARRYE DATTÉ

The innocent pleasures I enjoyed so long without fearing the issue are now the cause of my sighing! O certainty of love, what has become of you?
A stolen kiss which Madelon allowed upon her artless lip made me most happy: tranquil enjoyment, what has become of you?
When tender Guisland deigned to look through my eyes into my naked soul, to cherish me as a lover, I was happy: what has become of her?
When I considered my too disastrous fate from other points of view, my present hope sustained me: now it is lost, alas!
Is there no hope from you who should bestow it upon my deluded soul, O Datté? I have no further strength to escape the torment which pursues and kills me.
Since Parangon fled, alas, from this earth for ever, my heart has lacked all energy, and languishes directly I lose sight of you!

The rhythm of these stanzas, imitated from Régnier, leads me to think that they were inspired by a tender memory of Madeleine, and that I was thinking very much more of her, whom I had formerly adored, or of Madame Parangon than of Mlle Datté. . . .

Some days later, out of boldness or impudence or the sheer exuberance of my senses, seeing her standing at her window, which had a little balcony, I blew her a kiss from mine. Whether because she mistook my window for another, or for some private reason of her own, I know not; but she returned my kiss and then shut her window. I took this as an invitation; so I tidied myself and went downstairs. Day was falling, and it was the hour when coquettish women begin to put on dresses pleasingly adorned.

Datté was dressed in white Indian muslin, patterned with bunches of cherries and trimmed with rose. She was just going upstairs as I reached her door. Although I could only see as far as her belt, I recognised her white shoes and the pretty dress, so I followed her. It was beginning to get dark, and she addressed me by the name of some other man. "Here is my candle," she said. "Go and get a light from M. Desbœufs." I was tempted to behave as I had in the Rue de Grenelle, but I did not succumb. . . . She unlocked the door and entered her room. I obeyed her quite simply, fetched a light, came back, and handed her the candle. She looked at me in the greatest astonishment! "Did Monsieur Pointot give you my candle?" "Yes, Mademoiselle." "You are a friend of his, then?" "Yes, Mademoiselle." "Of course, you live opposite, next door to him, looking on to the little street." "You have not forgotten, Mademoiselle, that I sent my respects to you through Bonne Sellier . . . and my verses?" "Oh, yes! But you know the younger M. Pointot is very rich and I am not, so my father wants me to marry him. . . . And then he loves me!" "Yes, Mademoiselle. M. Pointot has sung the praises of your charms so well that I adore you at least as much as he does." "How strange! And suppose he knew that you wanted to follow in his footsteps?" "I am conscious of my inferiority from the material standpoint. I adore you . . . but without hope." From the way that the girl looked at me I concluded that she had taken my Neapolitan kiss as coming from young Pointot. While I was thinking thus, I heard someone coming upstairs; the key turned in the door and a tall, red-haired, badly-made young fellow entered. "Your friend is here waiting for you." "My friend! That?" "Surely! Don't you remember me?" I asked smiling. "Certainly not!" "And you are quite right. But Mademoiselle mistook me for you a minute ago on the staircase, and gave me her candle to light, and, as I did not want to frighten her, I pretended that you had given it to me. . . ." Pointot rose in a fury, made to hurl himself upon me, called me thief, and created such a terrible hubbub that Mlle Jarrye, amazed at his pugnacity, took my side, at the same time begging me to depart. She added that M. Pointot could see me at my window, next door to his own, on the following day if he wanted to. So I withdrew, begging the fair Datté to bear witness to my respectful behaviour with her. . . . Next day Pointot saw me at my window, and also saw his mistress return my salutation. He hurried to Bonne Sellier to find out about me, and was answered with a burst of praise. "Have no fear for your mistress," added Bonne. "He is on the point of returning to his own province." Then Zoé arrived, whom Pointot knew and respected, and after having heard what she had to say, he was ready to apologise to me. That evening, when I was passing under Mlle Datté's window, she beckoned to me. I was with her in a single bound. She told me briefly what her betrothed had done, and then: "Let us punish Pointot!" she said. . . . I could have thought I was with Isabelle again. . . . After I had left, she married Pointot and his income of fifteen thousand livres. She did well. I only saw her two or three times after this, and that twenty-five years later, by the strangest chance! . . . I was moved by this adventure, as I can see by the verses which I began in Paris, and, still under its inspiration, finished at Sacy:

> *Ah, terrible sensibility, fatal gift of the gods, you rend my heart! Oh, how I hate you! A divine creature has inspired the tender passion in me, without effort or craft or any desire to charm. I resist Love, but my senses compel me in spite of myself, and, even as I resist, I find myself fled to her. My hungry eyes devour her beauties. When I see her I hesitate – sometimes I wish myself farther and sometimes nearer. I find wit, grace and youth in her, and a soul for delicate love.*

(At Sacy)

> *O perverse age and rightly detested! I lack the wealth to crown my vows and win Datté, and must therefore lack all else. Though this sorry state of things both shocks and wounds us, yet we are slaves of the times, and may not pursue love without the sanction of Plutus! Each man is smitten and his sighing heart desires the smiter. How many times has Datté not advanced three steps to meet me and withdrawn but two? . . . Ah, over-flattering hope! She only knew me by sight, and all was ended when we became acquainted. . . . I have but one virtue, I know how to love; but one treasure, the habit of knowing how to do without it. How happy had I been if my young mistress could have been contented with such true wealth! But if she herself were willing, no doubt a greedy father, esteeming himself prudent, would despise this patrimony, though to my thinking it is the only one in the world. His opinion in this would be a sin against her. I must find the secret of being happy, without his daughter and without wealth, without this god called gold. I must extinguish a love impossible of success, and seek a sweeter and more tranquil happiness. I can find it without gold in an object no less fair; my heart seems to be calling to the tender* Gueneau.

The time for my departure drew near; the threads that bound me to Paris broke one by one or were already weak. At the house of my sister Margot's forewoman, during the most exquisite period of my union with Zéphire, I had met the elder Mlle *Gueneau* of Vermenton, who was a maternal cousin of my step-brothers and sisters. She was an amiable girl, and it would be a suitable marriage with which my parents would be delighted, because her father had property at Sacy. We met again at Mme Beaucousin's for dinner, when I was saying my goodbyes, and she seemed pleased to see me. . . . We spent part of the afternoon alone together on the bench in front of the door, and I showed her the beginning of my verses to Mlle Datté. "You are very clever, cousin!" she said. "I began them for her," I answered, "but, if you like them, I will finish them for you; and if you are returning home soon, you shall see them." Michelle

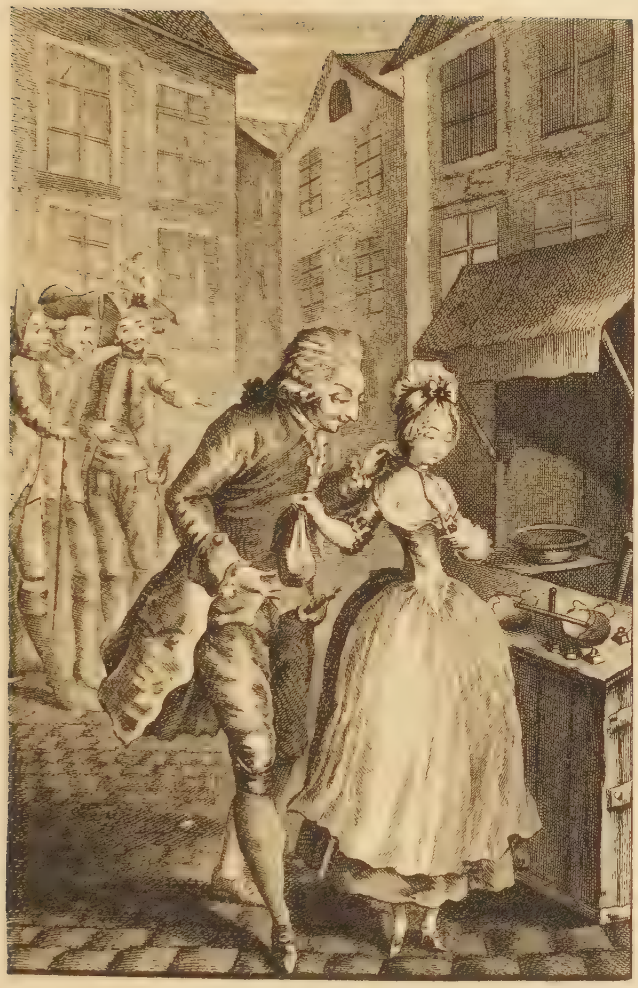
Gueneau must have interpreted this as a declaration of love, for she blushed. My sister, who had been listening, said: "My cousin is worth all your light-o'-loves put together, brother!" "I agree with you, sister. . . ." And Michelle blushed more than ever. She told me later that she was leaving Paris soon, and that her father and mother would welcome me at Vermenton. As I deferred my departure for nearly a month, she left before I did. . . . We shall hear the end of my relations with this sensible and attractive young person in the course of my visit to Sacy.

On the point of departure, and full of my plan for visiting Marianne Tangis and, if that came to nothing, of falling back on Michelle Gueneau, an erotic discovery detained me a fortnight longer in Paris. *Victoire Versailles* was Mme Knapen's chambermaid and a distant relative of hers, and her favoured lover was a M. *Champagne*, a learner printer who slept in a loft above the type cases. . . . One Sunday, as I was working, his coat dropped from the loft, and a lot of letters fell out of the pocket. We know that a journeyman had complete rights over an apprentice, so, by abusing these, I was at liberty to read the letters. I did abuse them. What was my surprise to find that they were quite well-expressed love letters, wherein Victoire (who, it will be remembered, used to bring the workmen their candles with the elder little Knapen) rehearsed in lyric language the favours she had granted her dear Champagne! . . . It was midday, and I had not meant to return after dinner; but I came back for Victoire. . . . She was alone in the apartment; everyone had gone out to enjoy the fine weather. I satisfied myself of this, and, at four o'clock, went down to suggest that we should have a little meal together in the case room where I worked. She consented, for Mme Knapen's chambermaids were no more Lucretias than others of their kind. I bought a twelve-sou pie, a dozen biscuits and a good bottle of wine, both for the same money, a pound of almonds and raisins for eight sous, and a sweet loaf for four: total, forty-eight sous. We ate copiously. The biscuits soaked in wine made Victoire a little merry; then I asked her abruptly and without preparation whether she reckoned on marrying Champagne. "No," she answered. "He has no position, and my family would be against it." "Yet you love him, and have given him everything. These are proof of it." (And I showed her her letters.) . . . "Oh, please do not tell anyone," exclaimed Victoire, turning pale. "He was on the spot; and you know that I have the green sickness. . . ." I saw that there was little love in the business and less delicacy. Anyone else would have done as well to cure the green sickness. It was an affair of half an evening, but it made me calmer in Zoé's presence.

Victoire was more modest than I had reckoned; she was ashamed, and left the house two days later. Her place was taken by *Claire Morizot*, a young girl from Angers; she was prettier and knew more of the world, which was very necessary. The charming Claire attracted my attention, and after I had talked to her, I saw an easy prey. . . . She had been entered as a novice in a Convent, because she refused to marry a wealthy old man. She had climbed the walls and escaped to Paris, where she went into hiding by taking service. . . . So much she told me and then stopped, omitting the half of her history. . . . I wove great plans round this girl, with whom I used to breakfast every morning. She arranged for us to sleep together with the connivance of *Aimée* the cook, who shared her own bed with my comrade Héraut. . . . All this only lasted a week. One morning, while Aimée was preparing our breakfast, a little Savoyard appeared and whispered something to Claire, who followed him downstairs at once. I suspected that something was toward and, going out on the landing, looked over the balustrade. . . . Hearing Claire utter a cry of surprise and fear, I ran downstairs, only to see a cab going away with, it seemed to me, a policeman inside it. We heard no more about her; but a woman, who had probably been stationed there for the purpose, accosted Aimée in the market, and told her that Claire Morizot had taken a place on her arrival in Paris and had there been guilty of theft. The girl had then taken refuge in the obscurity of service, thinking that she would thus escape notice, seeing that she never went out. But we conjectured that all this was invented at the instigation of her parents, who never even troubled to send for her trunk; whereby Aimée profited. For if Claire had stolen anything, surely her trunk would have been searched?

So now at last I was ready to go; there was nothing to keep me longer. Two days before I left, Van Wolxem's mistress came with him to the printing works. She was sallow, as was Mlle Douy, but her skin was clearer and smoother. I had caught a glimpse of her before this, and she had roused the most violent desire. On seeing her again, I resolved to conclude with her my erotic career among the women of Paris. I asked her in a whisper if I might escort her home. (Note that she was the kept mistress of an old watchmaker of the Palais.) "Oh, certainly! I will send Wolxem on an errand." She despatched him to fetch her gloves which she had left at his house, and we left directly he had gone. . . . I saw her again next day, but for what preceded and followed after this adventure, see my *Calendar*, wherein all such little diversions are linked together in historical order.

I never felt so strongly the emptiness of possession without love as when with Sophie Wolxem. I returned home, overwhelmed with the favours of this temperamental girl whom I had only wooed to keep myself away from



Zoé, and set to work on my packing. Zoé came into my room. "So you are going to-morrow!" she said sadly. "Oh, how we shall miss you, dear Nicolas. . . . Do not stay away too long!" "I have plans, and mean to bring back a companion worthy of Zoé. . . . Ah, if it might be Marianne Tangis!" Zoé left the room, no longer able to hide her tears. I ran after her and gave her (thanks to Sophie) a brotherly kiss. She told me that all our friends were coming to urge me to return quickly. . . . I finished my packing, and then went to say my goodbyes to the *Rue de Savoie*, to my sisters, to my landlord the bill-sticker, and to my dear attic, gaily papered with theatrical posters, which I had not given up. There I burst into tears. When I gave him back the key, my landlord offered to carry my baggage to the Auxerre boat next day. . . . Then I returned to Bonne. "Oh, if only my sister Sophronie were not ill," she said, "I would have introduced you to her and you would have stayed with us. I have kept her away from you so far, but now you are ripe for her, and I would have let you see her to prevent you from leaving." I thanked this excellent woman with emotion, said goodbye to my fellow-boarders, and returned to Zoé.

All my friends with their sweethearts were already gathered together. Loiseau was as sad and depressed as though it had not been he who first suggested my departure; Zoé was regretting that she had seconded him and said as much, but without advising me to remain in Paris. We all exchanged a thousand proofs of our mutual attachment, but, in spite of this, supper was a sad repast. When the time came to part, I kissed the ladies: "Good luck," said Sidonie, "and bring your good luck back to us!" "Lucky or unlucky, come back to see your Zéphirette," said Mme Gaudet. "Come back in time for our marriage," said Élizabeth Leriche, and I kissed her twice, for she was no longer Mme Deschamps. Alas! It is one of my misfortunes that I never saw her again. "Return, my poor unfortunate brother," said Rosalie. "Your presence gives me back my mother and my sister!" (Victorine had been brought to bed of her eldest daughter, that pretty Monclar to whom I addressed my singing in 1776.) "Oh, come back," cried Bonne, "come back a cripple with torn ears, and I will promise you happiness." "Come back," said Zoé, "to console your friends for what they will suffer in your absence." I fell on my knees and kissed Zoé's hands. Then I exclaimed in a voice that rang through the house: *"Farewell, Zéphire! Farewell, Suadèle! Forever one in memory! Farewell!"* At this everyone burst into tears, and in tears we parted. . . . And I had been with Sophie Wolxem during the day! . . . Oh, human heart! . . .

Next day all my friends, together with Zoé, escorted me to the boat. Loiseau shuddered when the moment came to part! He held out his arms, and we embraced. . . . His tears flowed over me. . . . Boudard, Renaud, and Gaudet gathered round to fortify us. "There are a couple of true friends!" remarked a passing sailor to his fellows. "I am leaving Paris," I sobbed, "loving it most tenderly! I loved Auxerre tenderly too, but I feel that I love Paris as a child loves the mother who spoils him!" Then I kissed Zoé, saying: "Farewell, other half of my friend . . . and of myself! Speak of me often to my Éléonore. Tell her how dear she is to me, and how her constant presence . . . would give me back . . . her sister . . . and all that I have lost! . . . Farewell, Zoé, my sister and my dearest friend! Wife of my Loiseau, and friend of Zéphire and of Éléonore!" "Ah, may I always be your friend," she answered, "and in every sense that you have given to that word!" The gangway was being lowered away; the signal had already been given. . . . I embraced Loiseau again, pressed Gaudet's hand and exclaiming: *"Zephirette!"* jumped into the clumsy vessel. I remained on deck, gazing, as we moved away, at all my friends, but especially at Loiseau and Zoé. . . . I was, as they were, incapable of movement. . . . They did not leave the bank until they lost sight of me. But I could still see Loiseau and Zoé standing there, and it was for the last time! . . . Almighty God, I have deserved the misery of outliving them! Loiseau, virtue personified, was the first to be struck down! . . .

Reflection is impossible amidst the tumult of a passenger boat; its noise stuns every emotion and the mind is continually distracted by new scenes, sometimes pleasant, more often disagreeable, but all engrossing. So for a day and a half I did not think.

I left the boat at Sens with some other young fellows, and we made Auxerre on foot in a day without over-fatigue, although it is a matter of thirteen leagues.

I parted from my fellow passengers at *Appoigny*, because of the emotion I was bound to feel at sight of my tutor city. I paused for a while at the Chapel of Saint-Simon to salute Colombe, although I had not asked news of her on my way through Joigny. . . . Then I proceeded slowly, my eyes, guided by the spire of the Cordeliers, searching for the white windows of the printing shop. At last I descried them, and the sight of this house where I had passed my adolescence under Colette's eyes released my tears! . . . From where I stood, everything awoke a memory; I guessed at Marianne Tangis's house; Rose's house I could see and without emotion. I searched for my cousins' humble dwelling, but it was hidden by the town walls. . . . I cannot express my state of mind as I went down the hill! All my acquaintances passed before me in imagination, and especially Aglaé Ferrand. . . . When I reached the Porte de Paris it was only five o'clock, and I should have pushed on to Saint-Bris without pausing in the town;

but the thought of Marianne Tangis decided me to go to my cousins' house. I found my cousin Edmée alone (if she could be said to be alone with six children around her, four of her sister's and two of her own), and this good, this most excellent young woman was quite upset by the sight of me. . . . She recovered, however, and threw herself into my arms. . . . We talked, while awaiting the return of her father and sister and of my two cousins. We recalled old times, and the beginning of our friendship. I spoke of Madame Parangon . . . I could speak of no one else but her – not a word about Fanchette. . . . I briefly related the story of Zéphire and Suadèle and of their loss, of my marriage with Henriette, and said a word about Éléonore. . . . I had just uttered the name of Marianne Tangis, when we heard everyone returning from the vineyards. Honest Père Servigné, Catherine and my two cousins were overjoyed to see me. . . . I turned to things of more general interest, which Edmée and I had not talked about; such as the death of Madame Parangon and my despair, etc. Then, with an effort, I asked for news of Marianne Tangis. The sisters looked at each other in embarrassment. "I will make enquiries," said Catherine. "But I must leave to-morrow morning!" I said, and asked my cousins to collect my baggage from the boat and despatch it by the carrier to Vermenton. After this Edmée and Catherine, who had been insisting that I should give them a few days, did not press me further; only M. Servigné said: "Come and see what these good lads you gave to me have done to my vineyards to-morrow morning." "Ah, my poor, dear, good cousin!" said Catherine. "He gives to others, and loses everything himself. But a heart once given to him is only taken away by force, and then it breaks – without the precaution that I took. . . ." I understood that she was referring to her action in giving me Edmée on the eve of her marriage, an action which you will have condemned, Reader! But learn that there was nothing vicious about Catherine, she was saving her sister's life. . . . I did not in the least understand the first part of Catherine's remark. "The sight of this town and its surroundings is too painful for me to stay in it . . . " I said, in answer to M. Servigné, and an imperceptible gesture from Catherine prevented him from insisting. . . . I could detect something evasive in their answers to my questions about Marianne Tangis: "Tell me the truth," I said to Catherine. "Is she alive?" "Yes, she is alive." "If she is alive, then I know her and she loves me," I said with assurance. "Yes, she loves you." "Ah, I am too lucky!" "No, not too lucky!" answered Catherine. We had prayers and went to bed. . . .

Breakfast was ready when I woke next morning, and I sat down to table with this honest family. "You will find out what I want to know?" I asked Catherine. "Yes, yes, and I will tell you everything the first time you come to see us." After breakfast I wrote a word to Loiseau, and gave my letter open to Edmée, so that she could put it in the post. Then I set forth alone, following the river's edge. I met no one, and re-entered the town by the Dyers' wicket, meaning to get news of Marianne from Mlle Meslot or Mlle Fourchot, never reflecting that these girls had been married for four years. . . . I smiled at myself, as at another Epimenides, when this thought came to rouse me from my abstraction. I only saw Tulout, Mlle Meslot's brother-in-law, and him I begged to tell her that *I had brought back my heart to she knew whom*. . . . He did not fail me.

When I came to Saint-Gervais, I turned aside to stand under the archway. There I paid a tribute of tears to Marguerite, who came first to my mind because of Éléonore. Then I wept and sobbed for Madeleine Baron; and then, personifying these ruins, I told them that Éléonore was the daughter of her whose tender farewell to me they had witnessed! (Ah, if I had known of Louise's existence!) After this outburst of emotion, I returned to the high road, looking back again and again, as had old Debierne; and, imagining myself as old as he, I gazed upon this town, the cradle of my mind, my soul and my heart; and guided by the different public buildings which marked the quarters, I exclaimed: *"Oh, adored Colette, it was there you lived! There you said farewell to me! There . . . O anguish . . . you expired! And there lived Madeleine! . . . There I talked to Colombe, and turned my back on happiness! . . . And there I found relief with my tender Marianne Tangis from Rose's caprice. . . . Oh, beloved Marianne! . . ."* So I walked on, going over in my mind all the amiable persons whom I had known and loved; I thought of Toinette, of Émilie Laloge, etc. I wept as I walked; but there was a charm about my grief which I cannot express! . . . Thus does wise Nature mitigate, like a kindly mother, the sufferings of a sensitive heart, mingling some pleasure even with tears of anguish! . . .

Where the high road cuts through the hill and Auxerre disappears from view, I turned to salute it with a thrice-repeated *Farewell*! I paused for a moment to gaze on the fine amphitheatre formed by the city, and then, my hunger for it still unsatisfied, descended the far side of the hill murmuring its name. . . . Thereafter the images presented to my mind were much less vivid. At last I reached Saint-Bris, and asked for M. Debierne. "He died three weeks ago," they told me. "Oh, most good and estimable old man!" I exclaimed. . . . "But his son lives close by here, towards the church, and he is a fine man," they added. I replied that I had only known the father, and went on without pausing. I had already reached the church of Gouais, a suburb of Saint-Bris, when I heard shouts of

Sir Traveller, sir traveller! . . . I turned round. It was M. Debierne's son, who urged me to come back with him to his house. I refused politely. "At least tell me how a young man of your age came to be the friend of an old man such as my worthy father?" I described our encounter four years previously, the day of my return from Sacy to Auxerre. "So it was you!" exclaimed the old man's son. "My late revered father ordered us never wittingly to let you pass through Saint-Bris without honouring his youthful friend in your person. . . . So come, for I cannot let you go. You must dine with us, for my wife and children must see my venerable father's young friend. . . ." I was given a welcome such as I had never had before anywhere in the district, save in the house of Père Levêque. Mother and children gazed at me with admiration! There was a boy of twenty, a girl of fifteen and several younger children. They made me the occasion for a little feast, and ran to invite the Curé and several relatives to it. At dessert they begged me to give them a full account of my meeting with the good old man. This I did, with all those details of which the honest family were unaware. Dear Reader! If you could have seen the eager interest of father, mother and children; of the whole table, indeed, not excluding the Curé! . . . I owe it to the people of this district to say that they are excellent sons, as long as they are uncorrupted by life in towns. . . . When I had finished they told me all that I did not know. "When Tulout told my revered father that you were the young man who had so nobly avenged the girl of Auxerre, he exclaimed: 'And so, by my good luck, I have had the honour of speaking to him without knowing it! . . . And yet I should have recognised him, by his modesty and his respect for age.' When he got home he called us all together: 'Listen! Listen all of you!' he cried. And he described your meeting, word for word as you have just related it. Then he added: 'Children and grand-children! Happy are the parents of that young man! I give him the father's blessing I would give to one of you; God grant him glory and travail, for glory cannot be won without travail! . . . Now, children, by the sacred authority of a father, I command you, whether I am alive or dead, never to let my young friend (for so I call him as I do not know his name, though I mean to find it out) pass through Saint-Bris without inviting him to enter and refresh himself and sleep the night; and if by chance I am not here, I wish him to take my place at table. This is my will.' Three days later he received a visit from your father (who already knew him) and was told of your departure for Paris, of Madame Parangon's plans for you, the fulfilment of which was assured, and everything else about you. . . . And when your honoured father had left, my father came to us (for they had been talking in private), and said: 'Oh, that lad, that lad! I am no longer surprised! Honour and virtue run in his veins! He is the son of Restif the Upright of Sacy, and brother of that devout curé of Courgis, who is the well-beloved disciple of our saintly bishop, M. de Caylus. . . .' (At this point, the Curé rose overjoyed to embrace me.) 'Therefore I more strongly charge you to fulfil my wishes!' And when is your marriage to take place?" I made answer diffidently that it had miscarried, owing to the death of my friends and patrons, Madame Parangon and her father. "Honourable friends!" exclaimed the pastor, "both in themselves and through you who was their friend! . . . I would praise your sentiments, were it not natural that you should have them." Then he sang the praises first of my eldest brother, and afterwards of old M. Debierne. "They are men of the old school, and will leave children like themselves." The whole family made much of me, and wanted to keep me with them for some days. The pastor offered me a bed. "They are expecting me at home," I answered, "for I wrote from Paris. My father is a man, and would merely think I had been delayed; but my mother . . . is a mother, and would imagine all sorts of misfortunes." "Oh, how I love you for that!" exclaimed Mme Debierne. "Did you notice that he did not say *my mother is a woman,* but *my mother is a mother*?" "The former would have been more exact," answered the pastor, "but Monsieur Nicolas's phrase is the more delicate." They commended my haste to be away, and escorted me in a body as far as la Faé, or la Fée, Wood; where they embraced me as though I were a son or a brother. . . . And there I shed all my Paris vices. Would I had not resumed them on my return! . . . (They fled to Dijon to await me.) . . . This virtuous family had restored my native goodness, and I preserved it while in my father's house. . . . Wretched man! Were all my good instincts, all my virtues, merely borrowed? All my vices, all my crimes native to myself? . . .

Standing alone at the foot of the hill, I gazed over the woody solitudes, which so vividly recalled the Saint-Mayeul dormitory and Bicêtre. When I had topped the hill and was crossing the road between Irancy and Saint-Cyr-les-Colons and Courgis, my emotion was renewed; I seemed to see Jeannette Rousseau, guarded by two dragons with fiery eyes. Still going forward, I recalled all that had been in my mind on my first journey home, and on every like occasion after, during my four happy years. My emotion grew when I had crossed the Hôpitaux Wood and found myself on Sacy ground; and when, from the top of Vèzehaut, I could descry the hills where, in my childhood, I had shepherded my father's flocks, sweet tears flowed from my eyes, and my soul grew drunk on a host of simple, innocent memories. . . . As I descended the mountain, my senses grew calmer, and so I arrived at last at the door of my father's house.

So finishes the Fifth Epoch of my Life. . . . You will have realised that I have hidden nothing, Reader, because often you will have recognised your own thoughts and emotions in mine; your own weaknesses and virtues in my virtues and weaknesses. Often I have *unveiled* your heart to yourself, in unveiling mine to myself. And as for the things I did, and you have not done, have I not often described what you have thought of doing? . . . I have not, nor ought I to have, followed the example of Ovid, exiled for Julia:

> *Et quæcunque adeo possint afferre pudorem,*
> *Illa tegi cæca condita nocte. . . .*
> *Trist.*, Eleg. vi, 31.

END OF THE FIFTH EPOCH

SIXTH EPOCH

RETURN. DIJON
THIRD VISIT TO PARIS
MARRIAGE, ETC.

1759-1767

SIXTH EPOCH

Return. Dijon. Third Visit to Paris Marriage, Etc.

1759 – 1767

> *Heu! quam quod studeas ponere*
> *ferre grave est!*
> Ovid, *Amores* II.

SOMETHING in the nature of a phenomenon signalised my arrival. One of the dogs, who did not know me, rushed out to prevent me from entering, and an older dog, summoned by his fellow's barking, came to his help. But the latter soon recognised me, and began to whine with pleasure and roll at my feet. The younger dog paused amazed, growled feebly, then, following the example of the other, he too began to wag his tail and caress me. After them came a third new dog, attracted from the house by the noise, and started to throw herself upon me; but my two friends seized her, though she was a bitch, and held her, one by the neck and the other by the skin of the belly, and would not let go until I called them off.

I had been seen from the little window of the bedroom and, when I went in, my chair had been set ready for me by my sisters. Edme Restif received me with open arms! This admirable father could see no more in me than a son beguiled and led astray, and an unhappy man! And as for my mother, I was just her son come back again after four years of absence.

Supper was made into something of a feast. Besides the family, there were three guests: the pastor, Antoine Foudriat; Jacques Béraut, the school master; and a certain M. Lenain, formerly a Paris nobleman's steward and now retired to Sacy where he owned some property. Everyone toasted with my father save myself; my respect for him prevented me from holding out my glass to his; but my father proffered his to me, saying: "We are now in the year 1759, I think?" "Yes, father." "And from 34 to 59 is twenty-five. . . . My son, you can do it." And the estimable old man made me drink with him. I bowed profoundly. "Now you are a freed man!" said M. Lenain; and all the guests drank to the health of the *new man*, and by that name I was called throughout this repast.

When we had finished eating, Antoine Foudriat begged me to tell the true story of some of the adventures attributed to me. . . . I began by relating what had happened at Saint-Bris, and this opening moved my father to tender tears: "Yes, Nicolas is a man," he said to the pastor. "That was told like a man and done like a man." "And a well-taught man," exclaimed Maître Jacques. "While I was in Paris," said M. Lenain, "I was very given to reading novels, but not one of them had the charm, the interest born of truth, which I find in that story." My mother only kissed me. . . . Then everyone fell silent; it was a command to begin the narrative which had been demanded.

I bowed . . . and then began with a short summary of everything that I had done since I had left Sacy in '51. I described my arrival in Auxerre and my early sufferings; my meeting with Edmée Servigné at Vaux; my honourable connection with Mlle Manon Prudhot, and Madame Parangon's extreme kindness on that occasion; my chance of an advantageous marriage with Mlle Madelon Baron, which had led me to relinquish every other plan; her death and my heart-rending grief thereat; my idyll with Émilie Laloge; my affection for Colombe, after Madame Parangon had promised me her sister's hand, and our virtuous separation; my relaxations with the witty Rose, Annette Bourdeaux's neighbour; my unfathomable respect for Marianne Tangis, and here I added that, with my father's consent, I hoped to resume my courtship of her; my farewells to Madame Parangon and Mlle Fanchette, which I described in detail and with great emotion. . . . "Ah, I was there myself," exclaimed my father, "and every word of it is true. . . ." I went on to my arrival in Paris and my work at the Louvre; my blameless friendship with Marianne Tangis's friend, Jeannette Demailly, and her marriage with M. Ponsardin; my despair at Madame Parangon's death, and my virtuous Loiseau's cares and consolations. I was silent concerning my shameful adventures; but I hid little in Zéphire's story, which reduced everyone to tears. I described the tragic end of gentle Suadèle, and concealed nothing relating to my marriage with Henriette. . . . Finally I dilated on all that I owed to my virtuous friend, Loiseau, and to Mlle Zoé, his sweet companion, and to my other friends as well. . . . Then returning to Loiseau, I depicted our heart-breaking farewells, and dwelt again on all that he had done to preserve my life and principles.

I held my peace, deeply moved as was my audience. A profound silence reigned, and every eye was wet. The four older men looked at each other, faintly smiling. "Oh," exclaimed my dear mother, "may I be granted the opportunity of showing my gratitude to M. Loiseau, and of seeing my son's preserver with my own eyes!" "We thank you for your narrative," said the pastor, "which combined interest, propriety and truth." Then they gathered round my father and the two other old men, and began whispering; but I only heard these words: "He is not tied to this

Englishwoman." Then I remembered that I had not told the half of Loiseau's goodness to me, but the rest of my story was postponed to our dinner next day with the pastor. . . . There, during dessert, I described my longing that I might one day be rich, so that Loiseau and Zoé could be married. The wish seemed natural enough in a grateful heart; but when I afterwards recited my saviour god's fine Praise of Poverty (already quoted), with all the fire of a burning enthusiasm, my father, the pastor, and everyone else exclaimed aloud in admiration! . . .

All my love of learning came back to me in the peace of Sacy and with improving health. I began to translate Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, as I had translated Terence during my apprenticeship. As a relaxation from this long prose work, I interpolated every day verse translations of the couplets and single lines which struck me most in such poets as Ovid, Tibullus, Propertius, Martial, etc. Under my parents' eyes, my natural purity insensibly returned, and I lived in innocence; so that in a few weeks the "modest girl," as my cousin Droin the Rich used to call me, began to reappear. These changes for the better did not escape my father, for I heard him say to my mother one day: "Nicolas has an excellent nature! See how he has become once more what he was before he left us, save that he is no longer ignorant. He is not in the least like the bad characters of Vermenton and elsewhere, who bring back nothing from Paris but bad habits, and whose reason is so vitiated that they think these good and are brazen through blindness. Nicolas is straight thinking, and will one day be the man that I have always prayed the Lord to give me! . . ." I rejoiced at Edme Restif's attitude towards me, and was encouraged to pursue the plan which I had formed.

Loiseau wrote me two short and touching letters; I showed them to my father, and he was moved by them. But as their contents bear no relation to what was passing at this time, I will leave them for the moment to conclude what concerns Marianne Tangis. I received the promised letter from my cousin Edmée: *"Dear Cousin, When Marianne Tangis heard of your marriage with an Englishwoman, her family forced her to marry Hérissé; she is wretched, even without knowing that you are free. Her mother and sister are keeping this from her; but they cannot comfort her for having married, etc."*

This letter destroyed my sweetest hope; but one thing remained to me, and my parents were delighted at my suggestion that they should ask for the hand of the elder Mlle Gueneau. . . . My mother exclaimed that it would be Fanchette over again, and my father promised to approach his first wife's nephew on my behalf. He advised me to go to Dijon for the Sessions and find work there, while they arranged matters in my absence; and this plan was adopted.

I must, however, little as I like it, no longer delay the precipitate advance of misfortune. In his two short letters Loiseau had *congratulated me on my happiness in being with my dear parents, and on the predisposition towards virtue which had been restored to me in the bosom of my honest family.* Then he spoke of Zoé, *whose sisterly love for me exhaled the very essence of pure affection.* Finally in both letters there was a veiled allusion to *Léonore*, and in the last he told me that *the Comtesse de Tnomge had persuaded her to enter Saint-Cyr.* I was surprised at this, but never dreamed that it was a premeditated plan to take her absolutely from me. As a matter of fact, since her entrance into this institution, under a name that is still unknown to me, I have never seen her again. I only know in a general way that she often asked to see me, and that later she was married to a Chevalier de Saint-Louis, a Colonel of forty, who took her to his estate at the foot of the Pyrenees, some two hundred leagues from Paris. It seems that the Countess loved her passionately (whether for her beauty, or because she was the sister of the child that resulted from my adventure of the 26th of May, 1756, I know not) and, to give her a social standing equal to the one for which her sister was destined, had let it be understood that she was the daughter of some poor gentleman of Guienne. I have an idea that my sweet daughter died in bearing her first child. . . . I only got these glimpses into her life through a certain Mme *Brocard*, my sister Margot's forewoman, who often waited on the Duchesse de *Mortemârt*, her most exalted patron. The duchess liked Mme Brocard because she had a distinguished appearance, and used to amuse herself by telling her the gossip. It was through this same Brocard that I discovered the existence of *26th-of-May-Septimanette*. She always chattered volubly when she was present at my visits to her house, but in this case her love of gossip led her to betray a secret which was not her own. She told me the story of the lady and of my two daughters, mentioning their names, as of people who must be complete strangers to me. . . .

But this digression has interrupted my analysis of my friend's letters. At the end of the second he mentioned Henriette Kircher. Though no one had as yet reproached me for my marriage with this English girl, I spoke to my father about it and told him of the double Register in the church of Saint-André, and how one page had been torn out with the connivance of the rascally priest who had married us. (He did not escape punishment. He was privately condemned through the influence of the Archbishop, and spent two years in the cells at Bicêtre.) But at the very moment when I was having this conversation with my father, a terrible blow had fallen upon me! I had lost the better half of myself, and feeble planet that I am, I owe all my virtue to my virtuous friends! . . .

I will not pause over my literary productions at Sacy. Apart from my translations, I find two poems; the first an Ode or species of death chant addressed *To my Friends*, in which, Epicurus-like, I invite them to commemorate my memory by recalling my past pleasures, which I proceed to describe in eleven strophes. . . . This poem is to be found in *Le Drame de la Vie*, pp. 1232-1236. The second was in honour of *Colette*, and has only two verses, the second of which was not finished until my return from Dijon on the 3rd September (*ibid.* pp. 1326-7). Thus no present object occupied my imagination; they were all too inferior to those which I had lost or left behind in Paris. . . . Disaster was advancing upon me like a terrible cloud!

One day early in June, which was overcast despite the season, I was walking along the road between my father's boundary and that of the meadow *de la Cartaude*, when my father joined me and told me that he had just met the elder M. Gueneau in the village, and had said something of our plan: "Why certainly, Uncle; that could be arranged! . . . It seems that they met in Paris and did not dislike each other, for my Michelle is always talking about him." "That is what my nephew Gueneau has just said to me," continued my father, "and he would have dined with us, but for urgent business. . . ." I was overjoyed by this news, and was inwardly determining to devote myself exclusively to Mlle Gueneau, when a woman coming from the Vermenton market accosted us. She had a letter which, out of respect, she handed to my father, although it was for me. "It is from Paris," said my father, giving it to me, "and sealed in black." "It is from my friend Boudard," I said before opening it, "the son of your friend the surveyor." "Read it," said my father, walking away. I read as far as the words: *"We have just suffered an irreparable loss! M. Loiseau died yesterday . . ."* and then the writing blurred before my eyes, and my knees sank beneath me. I held out the letter to my father. "What is the matter?" he asked, supporting me. "What news have you had?" "My friend . . . is dead. . . ." Edme Restif read the letter, his arm still about me. I no longer have it, though I quote it from memory in my novel *La Malédiction Paternelle.* In it Boudard and Renaud, after having announced our common loss, strove to fill the awful void by testifying to their devotion to me. . . . Alas, no one could take Loiseau's place. . . . But what seems incomprehensible is that they never told me that Zoé wanted me and was expecting me to come immediately! . . . And she never wrote herself, counting on my friends! . . . She assumed that I was detained by my parents.

When he had finished the letter, my father saw that I was struggling with my tears. "Weep, my friend," he said pressing my hand. "Tears shed in memory of a friend do as much honour, ay, and more, to him who sheds them as to him who causes them." I threw myself on the ground and wept, scarcely conscious of the reason of my tears, or at least only confusedly so. "Come to the house," my father said. "Father . . . I must be alone. . . ." And Edme Restif left me, without further words.

Then I began to feel the full extent of my loss, and my first emotion was one of fear: "Now I have lost the last person whom I loved with all my heart and soul! The last who loved me as I need to be loved! . . . The last thing I really valued; my preserver and the charm of my life!" (For Loiseau was as dear to me as a mistress.) This seemed to me the worst of my misfortunes; no heart was left me for a refuge! . . . And at the same time the consciousness of all my losses came over me with a tenfold force; they crowded together into my imagination in an agonising manner, and I uttered a sorrowful, heart-rending cry. . . . I rose; I found strength to walk and hastened to the dark valley of Bourdenet, the most lonely of the pastures, and in this solitude, with only the heavens and the arid earth for witnesses, I abandoned myself to cries and tears and choking sighs. The woods of Nitry echoed my complaints. . . . At the end of an hour I began to think consecutively, and exclaimed: "I have lost my friend; he who knew all my secrets, my vices and my virtues, who shared my pleasures and my pains; who alone could help me to endure the latter, for never, never will I confide them to anyone else. . . . So young, I have lost the half of myself! . . ." I was silent for some moments, my eyes fixed and my tears streaming. . . . And as I so remained, I heard a solitary snipe near by, uttering a sad complaint. I thought it was taking pity on my pain, and exclaimed: "All Nature weeps for you, my friend!" But the little bird redoubled its cries, and flew up in frightened circles. I looked about, and saw a big snake ingurgitating one of the distressed mother's little ones. I shuddered: "Monster!" I exclaimed. "You are like that death which has just ravished my dear Loiseau from me; you draw into yourself and engulf as it does! Ah, could I but destroy death, as I mean to destroy you!" I raised a heavy stone with difficulty and in a moment the venomous reptile's head was crushed; its body writhed in a thousand contortions, but its head, the source of its poisonous life, could no longer direct it. I threw its body away, and it seemed to me that the bird thanked me with beatings of her wings; I watched her feeding the four babies that were left to her. But my suffering had only been suspended for a moment to sweep back over me with redoubled violence. I could not tear myself from this wild place, where everything suggested melancholy and fed my tears. I cried aloud, I added to my pain by going over and over the subject of my cries! Strength failed at last, and I fell to the ground in a kind of swoon.

I do not know how long I stayed thus; but two Nitry herds, leading their cattle to cooler pastures noticed me from afar, and came to me. On the way they came across the snake, whose body was still moving, and were amazed at its size! Then, seeing me stretched motionless at a little distance, they thought I must be dying of the reptile's poison. Catching sight of a cart a good distance off, on its way from Lichères to Sacy, one of them ran to stop the carter while the other carried me. They laid me in the cart, tied the dead snake to the old horse, and took me back to La Bretonne. On their arrival they stated that the huge snake which they had brought with them had bitten me. My father had gone in search of me, and my mother ran out in terror to look for the bite, but she could see nothing. They held vinegar to my nose, and I came back to myself. Then I related how I had killed the snake, just as it was swallowing a young snipe. . . . My father returned, followed by the curé, the surgeon and several villagers who had been convinced by the carter and the herdsmen that I was dead of a bite from the maddened reptile. But when they could find no swelling they began to have doubts, and my narrative completely reassured them. Then my father realised that grief alone had caused my swoon. He spoke to me with touching gentleness, and, as far as I could gather from their gestures, read the fatal letter to the assembled people. I saw the tears flow, and these, especially my dear mother's, lent something of sweetness to my own. They sang the praises of my friend; for they were acquainted with his goodness and his unwearying care for me in illness and in health. My father, of deliberate intent as well as through genuine emotion, praised him to excess (if such a phrase can be used when Loiseau is in question). . . . And as he praised, he condoled feelingly with me, saying: "I weep for both of you!" His extreme kindness mitigated my suffering; it was no less deep, but I was able to endure its bitterness.

My father made no attempt to arrange my marriage while I was in this melancholy state, but when he saw I was a little calmer, he advised me, rather as a friend than as a father, to visit Dijon, the capital of our Province. My mother was not in favour of this plan; she would rather have seen me established near to her, either with Mlle Gueneau or (as she did not like that lady's mother, a prideful woman, sister of Boudard the notary, my father's other nephew by his first wife) with Mlle *Sallins*, the daughter and niece of retail drapers of Vermenton, who were friends of hers and would have readily agreed to the marriage because of their affection for her. Mlle Sallins was plain rather than pretty, but she dressed with taste, and her real and comprehensive cleanliness, which excelled that of any other girl in the district, was quite as attractive as beauty. Moreover, she was my mother's choice. She was as suitable as Mlle Gueneau, and for my part, being without passion either way, I answered, when my opinion was asked: "Whichever you prefer; I will do as you like." Yet a feeling of unsettledness inclined me to follow my father's advice for the time; and he was delighted with the idea, because I could then make the acquaintance of our relatives by marriage, the *Cœurderois,* who lived in Dijon. This was finally decided upon, and I left Sacy, bundle on shoulder, at three o'clock in the morning of the 20th of June, 1759. Before leaving I had written sorrowfully to my three friends; the contents of these letters can be guessed, so I will only quote the one to Zoé:

> *Mademoiselle, and honoured friend! I am all the more distressed because I cannot doubt but that I could have effectually helped you to save my friend's life. . . . I could not wish you to hear my sobs and groans! . . . (Alas, it was my vices that brought misfortune upon the virtuous Loiseau, saddened and grieved him, made him ill and killed him!) But groan is not the word; I have howled in my anguish! I will not return to Paris yet, for I should only afflict instead of*

> *comforting you. . . . I am going to Dijon; I think it is necessary. Please address any letter to my father. . . . I pity you, I pity myself: pity me, I beseech you, as I pity you; for I feel that I have lost my energy and virtue, my happiness and the delight of my life. I have no hope, save in you; we can talk of him, and you will make his maxims live again. I will rejoin you as soon as I feel strong enough not to add to your sorrow. . . . I grow bewildered when I let my imagination dwell upon this subject; I cannot see, I am subject to incongruities which make my father fear for my reason. . . . I have told you that I am going to Dijon, and that I think it is necessary. . . . The death of my virtuous friend has proved a heavier blow even than that of the incomparable Madame Parangon; it has revived my grief for Zéphire. . . . I have no one but you to bring my Éléonore to mind; if I were to lose you, every tie with what remains to me would be broken. . . . Farewell until we meet again, my estimable friend!"*

Zoé's answer (which I did not receive until after my return from Dijon).

> *"I have seen all your letters, my friend, and long for you. But go to Dijon. . . . Ah, what a cruel fate is mine! . . . I will see Éléonore. She is an enchanting child, and makes me bitterly regret our Zéphire! . . . Let me see you quickly after your return from Dijon, I beseech you!*
>
> *ZOÉ DELAPORTE,*
> *So nearly Monsieur Loiseau's wife."*

My excursion to Dijon changed my destiny yet again. I gained the high road by way of Percy-le-Sec (the native place of Zéphire's mother), and thereby found myself at sunrise on a high hill, which offered to my eyes the scenes which used to ravish me on my journeys to Saint-Cyr. A sweet intoxication filled my being and I sang a Hymn to our father the Sun, shedding tender tears the while for myself and for those others whom I had lost. "O Colette, O Loiseau, O Zéphire! You who were the charm of my life, be now its chief regret and sorrow, O treasures I have lost!" I sang and said these words over and over, with tears running down my cheeks, until I found myself in unfamiliar country, and emotion dried in me. . . . Then

I considered myself, a journeyman travelling with his bundle on his back, and I said to myself: "O Colette, if you could see me now . . . the friend for whom you prepared, for whom you expected such a prosperous career! . . ." After this my mind turned, with an emotion less profound yet none the less tender, to Septimanie; to my picnic with Mlles Prudhomme and Baptiste; to my possession of Mlle Guéant (of which I afterwards made sure in the manner described in my *Calendar*, and which I still consider the acme of good fortune). "Alas, could these goddesses recognise in me their vigorous athlete?" I exclaimed. I reviewed all my past successes, in Auxerre and Paris, and the pleasure given me by so many pretty women. I liked to fancy them ranged along my road and watching me pass, shouldering my pack like some robust tramp. The sight of Percy, to the right of the main road, banished all such memories, and Zéphire filled my mind. I was buried deep in meditation, until the time came to stop and refresh myself. I scarcely saw Lucy-le-Bois, or Sauvigny with its superb woods and magnificent castle: recalled to me by her mother's native place, I saw only Zéphire through a cloud of tears, and behind her Suadèle the consoler. . . .

I did not stop for dinner until Rouvray, seven leagues from Sacy. It was then eleven o'clock. I asked for some soup from a pot that was boiling on the fire; it was made of cow and salt pork, but it was delicious. The mountain air of Morvand is seasoning enough for its dishes. Afterwards I was served with a piece of pork and an omelette, and a mug of wine (equal to half a bottle, Paris measure). I talked to the innkeeper while I was eating. He was of the Jansenist persuasion and, having committed certain indiscretions for his sect, amongst others that of hawking about songs against Beaumont, Archbishop of Paris, and against Boëtin, curé of

Saint-Étienne-du-Mont, who had refused the viaticum to the hymnographer Coffin, had been frightened by threats and had taken refuge in this district, where he had married. . . . I still had something of the Port Royalist about me, so we argued, each more eager than the other, about Jansenius, the Formulary, the Bull, Quesnel, the Hundred and One Propositions, etc. The innkeeper was enchanted! . . . When I had finished my dinner, I gave my host half a crown, and he brought me back fifty-three sous of change. Clearly the good Jansenist was treating me as a brother, so that party spirit can make even a religious fanatic disinterested! On this day I covered thirteen leagues (which is equal to nearly twenty in the kind of country about Paris) and slept nine leagues from Dijon. I supped off a roast pigeon, a salad and a mug of wine. As the pigeon was plump, some of it was left over, and also some salad and bread; and these were served to me for breakfast. . . . I drank a cup of wine, filled my flask with wine and water, and paid my score. It was twelve sous, yet these good people were not Jansenists; but money is rare in these parts. . . . There was a very pretty daughter living in the house who, as she was going half a league in my direction, insisted on carrying my bundle, saying that I should have plenty of time to get tired of it. The idea seemed to give her so much pleasure that I could not refuse. The people are extremely simple in this part of Burgundy, and, although money is scarce, they seemed to me to be better off than in Sacy, Nitry, Joux, Vermenton, Irancy, etc. As we parted, I offered her, as delicately as possible, a small coin. She blushed, and refused it without looking at it. I apologised in polite phrases, saying, amongst other things, that I had had no choice but to put some price upon a service which to me was without price. At Sombrenon I heard that her people were well to do for that part of the country, and much respected, and this enhanced the value of pretty *Christine's* service to me. But I was to see her again. . . . From the top of the Sombrenon range, the highest point in Burgundy, I had a lovely view. Down one side of it flows the Cure to join the Yonne at Cravant (or Crevant) half a league below Vermenton; and down the other, the eastern side, flows the Ouche, which widens into a lake opposite the South side of the park at Dijon. The valley in which the Cure rises is immensely deep, and although the sides slope so gently that they are cultivated from top to bottom, there is something astonishing about its profundity.

I arrived at Dijon at five o'clock in the evening, broken with fatigue, and put up at the *Image Saint-Nicolas*, near the *Porte Guillaume.* I ate at the landlord's table at fifteen sous a meal. For dinner we had soup, boiled meat and some bird, young pigeon, partridge or quail, with a bottle containing three half-pints, Paris measure, which is the Dijon pint. I have never lived so well as in this town, save that I was always given brown bread. We were waited upon by two girls, Marie Jehannin, a pretty Comtoise, and Joson, a plump lively wench and very approachable, who came from a village three leagues from Dijon. Marie Jehannin had the wasp waist of the Comtoise to an admirable degree, and her face was as modest looking as it was pretty and attractive. . . . We had a chat together the very first evening, as I was too tired to call on a printer to ask for work or to visit the Cœurderoi family. I managed to ingratiate myself with the appealing Marie, by my respectful attentions and the pleasant things I said to her, and a "politeness" which she termed "Parisian." She was surprised when I told her that I was a Burgundian. I felt an attraction towards her, the first since leaving the capital; and this gave a temporary relief to my sorrows, even while I revived them by relating some of my experiences to the pretty Comtoise. This is one of the surest means of wakening a woman's interest, and they should beware of it. . . . Besides the touching stories of Zéphire, Suadèle and Henriette, I related two licentious adventures, which happened about the same time as that with the three actresses and the party at the Hôtel de Hollande. I refrained from introducing these in their proper place, as I did not want to give an unbroken sequence of licentious episodes; but I think I may fairly give them here as an illustration of how two effects may spring from a single cause. You must know me as I am, Reader. These are the facts, and more comformable with the truth than as I related them to Marie:

One of my colleagues at the works, Voisin, a retail paper seller of the Rue Jacques, church-warden for his Parish and a devout, well-conducted man, came into the printing room one day on his way back from business, very much flustered and perturbed: "Dear Jesus! . . . Holy Virgin! . . . O my God! . . ." he repeated over and over again. We asked him what was the matter; and young Héraut, who has since done well in Comedy and was a very amusing person, fired questions at him: "O Sainte Ursule! O Sainte Cécile! What have you seen, Saint Voisin?" "Oh!" he exclaimed. "What have I not seen!" "Well, what, holy man? Did the heavens open?" "How sad! A Beauty . . . not seventeen years old . . . but so beautiful!" "Before I take you for a connoisseur in *fair Fairs*, I must know the street." "Oh! Rue Fromenteau . . . on the second floor . . . opposite the Château d'Eau," he said, hesitating a little. "She was at the window . . . it is a hair-dresser's shop. . . . A beautiful girl . . . beautiful as an angel! . . . I was looking at her. . . . I was admiring her. . . . She beckoned to me! . . ." "Beckoned?" "With a smile; how my heart beat. . . . Jesu-Maria! What a pity!" We were all listening. Héraut went on baiting him; but I donned coat and sword and slipped out. Voisin was watching me; Loiseau was setting up the title page of a Memorandum in another room. I went downstairs; they saw me cross the Pont Saint-Michel, and then I disappeared from view.

I reached Aurore's apartment. (We have already met her, but I did not know her at this time. Later she entered the house of Zéphire's mother, but I never saw her there as Zéphire was jealous of her. She saw me, however, but without recognising me.) She certainly was a beauty! "My fair one," I said to her, "with such a wealth of charms, how do you come to follow a profession so certain to destroy them? Has no honest man come forward to save you, no honest woman been touched by pity for your youth and beauty?" "No," she answered. "I followed a Carmelite to Paris, *P. Élisée* by name. He was preaching in my little village of Chateaudun during Advent and roused a longing for holiness in me; so I spoke to him, and he promised to take me to Paris and put me in a Convent. I went with him. He rented a little room in the Rue *Perdue*, deflowered me and kept me for about eighteen months. . . . One day when I was eagerly awaiting him, as I had not seen him for three days, he came in with a woman, still well enough to look at, to whom he displayed me as one shows off a mare to a horse coper. . . . She examined me, and then said coldly: 'Monsieur cannot look after you any longer; follow me.' 'You are going into a Convent,' said the monk. I was so accustomed to obey my Carmelite that I followed without a word. I expected the old servant, whom I had found in my little apartment, to come with me, and beckoned her. 'I am not coming,' she said with a snigger. When we arrived at this house, Madame Dupont, with whom I am still living, dressed me up, meaning to use me to attract custom in a millinery business which she then owned in the

Foire Saint-Germain. There I was noticed by various men of Madame's acquaintance; they would examine me and then talk to her in a whisper. . . . At last one of them apparently made a suitable offer. '*Let us go to the house,*' said Madame (a trade expression). When we got back here, I was shown into the first-floor parlour, which has mirrors and spring sofas in it. 'You have nothing to do but behave as you did with your Carmelite,' Madame whispered to me. She then cleansed and prepared me herself, while the man looked on, examining me through his quizzing glass, and from time to time expediting the business. When everything was finished, warm bath, a thorough cleansing in the bidet and syringing, a diaphanous chemise was slipped over me with a corset to match; I was tightly laced, given white silk stockings with apple green clocks, and pink slippers with very high heels; my hair was touched up and a black plume and an aigret encrusted with diamonds were fastened in it. Then a ruby necklace, borrowed from Tesnières, was put about my neck, and I was left alone with the man. At first he knelt at my feet and, addressing me by some name or other, said a thousand tender things. Then he undressed me bit by bit and, when I was naked, possessed me. But from that moment he seemed to go mad, and would have beaten me and torn me with his teeth, had not Madame entered by a secret door and helped me to escape, leaving him alone. For a quarter of an hour he was swearing at some woman, against whom he levelled the most dreadful reproaches. . . . I was less surprised than another might have been, for my Carmelite had sometimes bitten me during the act. . . . I had this man five or six times in the same circumstances; but the last time he nearly killed me, because he had his back against the door and prevented Madame from getting in. Also I declared that I would not receive him again. Then Madame gave me to anyone who came along, and chose another young girl for her eccentric clients. As for me, I take my chance at the window. . . . And I have just had the strangest man!" (And she burst out laughing.) "He was devout and full of *Jesu-Marias* and *how sads*!" "I wager that is my man. . . . He was describing your beauty and I hurried here to see you. How was he dressed?" "In grey, with a fair wig in large curls, and he had a big nose." "Exactly!" I exclaimed. "He walked past three times," continued Aurore. "I smiled at him . . . I ogled him. . . . And at last he came up. He plagued me for an hour with unparalleled salacity. . . . I was obliged to have him thrown out at last. . . ." After this long preamble, I let Aurore earn her half-crown, and returned to the printing shop.

"I am thankful to see you return so quickly!" said the pious Voisin, "I was afraid you might have gone to make certain of that poor young woman's beauty, and was in despair about it!" "We libertines," I answered (Loiseau was not in the room), "do not relish sin as much as the pious; we get through with it quickly. . . . I went to the Château d'Eau; I found the hairdresser's little house which has only two floors; the beauty was at the window; I ogled her, she beckoned me, I went upstairs. First I paid; a necessary preliminary. . . . Then I commended your good taste. Then I described you to the little rogue, and offered, on your behalf, to convert her. . . . She laughed impudently in my face: 'Pervert me, you mean!' And she certified that you had harassed her at every assailable point to such an extent that she was forced to have you thrown out of doors as a frenzied voluptuary." "Oh, slander!" "I followed your example; but not in everything." "Oh, liar!" "Tell me, how many times did you turn and come back again before you went upstairs?" At this the saintly Voisin blushed. "You came back three times, and pretty Aurore nearly killed herself over the signals which finally lured you up. . . . It is all very natural! She is the prettiest girl I have ever seen in my life! . . ." Voisin was pale and trembling: "You are joking?" he said. "Yes, you are joking. You have not had the time for all that. You only saw her." "When we leave work at the end of the day," I answered, "I can get proof that I have not invented a thing. I will take anyone with me who likes to come. . . ." Héraut and van Wolxem offered at once, and at eight o'clock we all three went to see Aurore, with Loiseau as escort to prevent any indiscretion. Then, before saying anything else to the girl, I made her tell the whole story herself; and as though she guessed my intention, she added details which she had not told me before about Voisin's erotic frenzies, and the kind of homage he had paid or wanted to pay to her various charms; his touches, kisses, bites, etc. Her tale was garnished with such licentious phrases that only my fellow-workers heard it through, for Loiseau could not endure it. . . . He asked me when we left if everything she had said was true. . . . "Certainly," I answered. "It is a mere nothing, but we must take advantage of it to plague our pious friend. Aurore and I understand each other about that." "O my friend, I forebode no good of an understanding between a girl of that sort and with that face, and a man of uncontrollable passions like yourself," exclaimed Loiseau. "In the name of friendship, remember Camargo!" I assured him that there was nothing to fear.

By the time Voisin arrived next day, for his business kept him until his wife could take his place in the shop, everyone in the printing room was thoroughly acquainted with his adventure, and his appearance was greeted with a regular charivaria. The men hammered on anything sonorous that they could lay their hands on. Voisin was not disturbed.

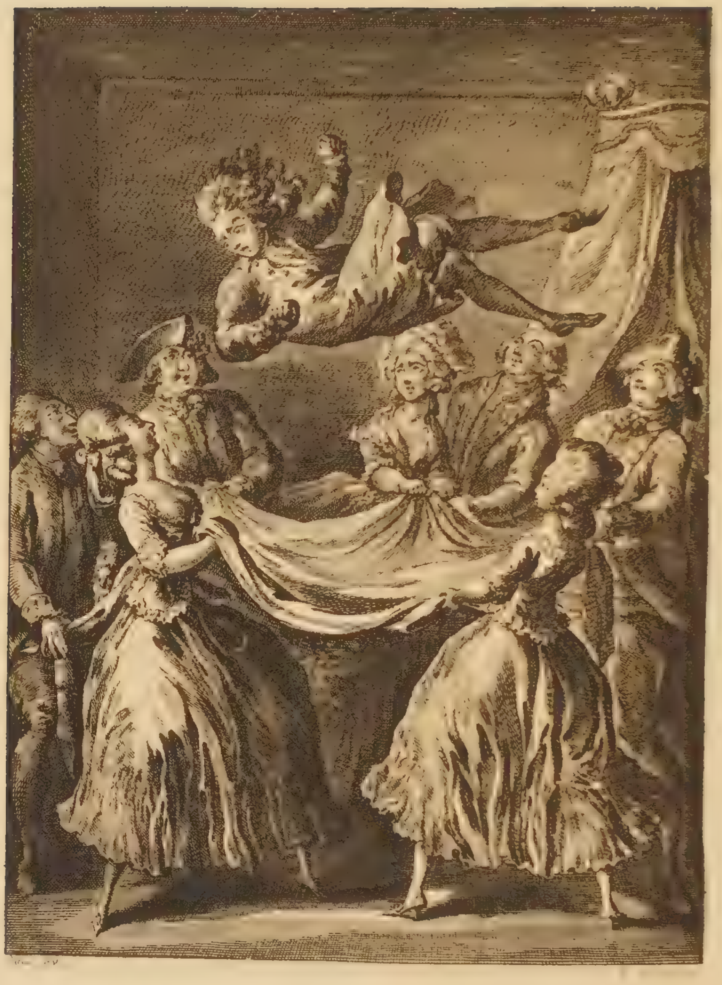
Then they railed at him and cried shame on him. He took it all quietly, convinced that they did not believe what they were saying. However when Knapen came up and the men told him what it was all about, Voisin realised that Aurore had said only too much, and tried to vindicate himself. But the kindly Loiseau, who did not love scandal, undertook his defence "against a prostitute," as he said, "who had been vaunting her shame to a lot of libertines." The result was that Knapen paid no attention to what he was told. I supported my friend, as it was not in my nature to make anyone suffer for his pleasures. . . .

I used to see Aurore from time to time, and the Sunday before I made Zéphire's acquaintance, she said to me: "My friend, I think I am not well. . . . However you shall lose nothing by it; on the contrary. You remember what I was saying about the little beginner who took my place with difficult clients, and especially with the old men? She is a charming Alsatian, and not one of them has yet been able to do anything to her; for their potency is in proportion to their tastes. You shall have the benefit of this piece of luck while Madame is out. I will introduce you to her, and you must put things right for us if an inspector comes in." Young *Bathilde* was locked up on the first floor, but the key was left with Aurore so that she could admit any old clients. She went downstairs, talked to the girl about me, and had no difficulty in persuading her to accept a young man in place of her superannuated skeletons. . . . She was a delightful child! Aurore had told her briefly how to receive me, and had made the most of her generosity in giving Bathilde one of her own lovers to make up to her for what she had to endure every other day. When she left us, she said: "I am going to keep a look-out from the second floor." I enjoyed this fresh and pretty girl undisturbed; she was all that Aurore had said, and it was only after I had delivered three assaults in somewhat more than an hour, that my kind friend gave the signal for retreat. I ran quickly upstairs to Aurore, who then came down with me to the first floor, where we met La Dupont. "This is one of my friends," Aurore said to her. "I am sending him away. You know why." "That is right!" answered the bawd. "Never deceive your friends." In this way I made my escape, and Aurore had my half-crown to herself, but she bought Bathilde some sweet pastries for her afternoon snack.

A long time after this, that is to say, in the interval between Zéphire's death and my marriage with the English girl, I had a strange adventure which grew out of my introduction to Bathilde. La Dupont moved from this house to the first floor of the *Hôtel des Américains*, in Rue Honoré, a little way above the Oratory. Aurore had left her, and I had absolutely lost sight of the girl. But Bathilde was doing Aurore's work, and a wide-awake little person called *Sailly*, had taken over the department of the *obsoleti.** As I was passing one day, I caught sight of Bathilde at the window, and she beckoned me to come upstairs. "'Pon my word," she said, "I have thought hundreds of times of the torture you saved me from! The very next day I was given to a hump-backed provincial, a terrible fellow! He would have torn me to bits but for your triple preparation! My little friend here has got to have her buttonhole buttoned one of these days. You had better prepare the way for her too." Then, turning to Sailly who was playing with a little dog, she said: "Here you are, my dear. This is the plucker I have talked about so much. He will do your business for you." "I shall be only too pleased!" answered the knowing child. I thought her charming. . . . "Let's have a look," she said, and she began to gratify

*An incorrect use of the word, as the *obsoleti* of Petronius are the old male prostitutes.

her curiosity with considerable freedom, while Bathilde supplied satisfactory details. "Come, let us get to work!" exclaimed Sailly. "No," answered the Alsatian. "Madame is due home and he won't be able to get out without being seen, and then he will have to leave six francs, because that is my tax." We agreed that I should come back towards evening, about the time when Bathilde left the window. I was on time. But that very evening La Dupont had arranged to entertain four musketeers at the house; they were to draw lots for Sailly at a louis a lot (this to be paid in advance) and to provide a magnificent supper, ordered from La Dupont's ordinary restaurant. The conditions were as follows: the lucky man was to have the virgin Sailly for the whole night; the one who drew next highest would take the Alsatian, also for the night; the third would have to put up with Mme Dupont, who was still fresh-looking and a fine woman; and the last would have the cook, a plump girl of about thirty-two and appetising enough. This agreement was well worthy of musketeers! . . . I only arrived about half-an-hour before La Dupont brought in her four soldiers from the Saint-Laurent Fair, where she had picked them up. Her chief saleswoman in the shop there was as honest as she was beautiful, and never came to the house. She was the innocent decoy who lured the birds, but her freshness was carefully preserved. . . . Bathilde showed me into a little closet which opened on the stairway, whence it would be easy to escape in case of surprise. Here Sailly joined me and we proceeded to business; but I encountered difficulties which were only overcome with great care and gentleness, and proved the wisdom of Bathilde's precaution in selecting a man who (unlike the terrestrial globe) was more remarkable for longitude than latitude. Sailly summoned all her courage and skill to my help, and at last I made a breach in the equinoctial line; but, whether from pain or pleasure, Sailly could not contain her cries, and La Dupont arrived with her musketeers at the height of the crisis. We scarcely heard them; they listened at the closet door, and it seemed to them that something of moment was happening inside. The Alsatian had not seen them from the window, either because they purposely kept in the shelter of the eaves, or because something had distracted her attention. Taken completely by surprise, she ran to meet them, dancing and displaying the greatest joy, and tried to coax them into the parlour. But they would not leave the closet door until it had been opened in their presence. I could hear everything that was said, but I did not leave go of Sailly until we had finished; and then I hid under the bed. La Dupont, knowing nothing of what had happened, said to the musketeers: "I expect she is frightened by the four of you. But she is wrong; she ought to know that I have no taste for debauch. . . . Open, little one; open the door to your Mamma." I signed Sailly to open the door, and she did so much against her inclination. She appeared to be alone, and they were just going to leave the closet and I thought I was saved, when a cursed little dog that La Dupont had been carrying under her arm and had just put down, ran under the bed and began to bark furiously. One of the musketeers stooped down, caught sight of a foot, seized it and pulled me into the middle of the room. All four surrounded me and I was taken into the parlour, where the table was ready set. I was put in the place of honour, and when the dinner was served, I was not forgotten. In the meantime, much against her will, Sailly had been examined and indisputable traces of my victory found. La Dupont asked Bathilde for an explanation and received an extremely full one, which occupied the first part of the meal; for the Alsatian went as far as to describe what had happened in the Rue Fromenteau, and how I had become



acquainted with Aurore. She added her reasons for giving me to Sailly. La Dupont was not a bad woman at heart and was not too angry by the end of the story; in fact she laughed at it. So did the musketeers, but somewhat sardonically, and with no whole-hearted enjoyment. After several bottles had been emptied, one of the musketeers, a great *puff ball* of a man with a most evil expression, asked the cook for a strong blanket. "What for?" asked La Dupont. "As Monsieur has given us a toss in the eye, he must be punished in kind." The ladies tried to stop them, but the musketeers adopted a tone which forced them to yield. I tried to escape with the help of the women, but it was in vain; I was thrown on to the blanket* and brutally tossed; for every time they threw me up they would have let go one corner completely as I came down, had it not been for the three women and the cook, who were holding the blanket too. When they saw that I could stand no more, they made me sit down to table again. Then La Dupont gave them seriously to understand that she did not permit any bad behaviour in her house. They merely sneered at her, and told her she was not in her own home; however, they settled down to eat and drink again, while Sailly teased them and played the madcap. She called for dessert, and then, choosing a moment when the four soldiers were talking together, she showed what was in her mind. Knife in hand she moved round behind them, and made a sign to Bathilde and me to take one each and stab them. I showed my horror of this action; so then she took away the lights from mantelpiece and sideboard and extinguished the chandelier, reducing us to one branching candlestick on the table. I was uneasy as to what she was going to do next. I saw her speak to the cook; and then the latter whispered, as she passed behind my chair: "Use

*See *Paysan-Paysanne pervertis,* 92nd illustration.

your chance when the dessert is brought in!" I understood. The door of the apartment opened on to the landing and the landing door had been kept open to admit the cookhouse boys, who deposited the successive courses in a sort of ante-chamber. Her arrangements made, Sailly proceeded to divert attention to herself by every kind of indecent trick and gesture. The door opened and dessert appeared. It was the moment. Room was being made for it on the table, when Sailly rose, a very Bacchante, and upset everything with a crash. I flew, jumping over the fragments of bottles and plates, and hurled myself down the staircase, trampling over the men who were bringing up the frangipane tart, fruits and preserves. I felt like a man escaped from shipwreck when I reached the street. I crossed over and climbed on top of a high stone, which is still standing (1784) in front of the door of a grocer's shop. From there I could see something of the tumult I had caused, and hear the shouts and curses. . . . Suddenly there was profound silence, probably for fear of bringing up the Guard, which is occasionally of some use. I got home, bruised from head to foot, though I was too much excited to be fully conscious of my hurts.

I could not go out next day, and my friend Loiseau feared a return of my attacks of suffocation. But I was able to work the day after, and got better little by little. The first time I could walk any distance I returned to La Dupont's house. Bathilde was at the window and beckoned me with a smile. This reassured me, for I had not been without anxiety as to the consequences of our escapade. Sailly appeared at the window beside her, and I went upstairs. Both the girls threw themselves into my arms, with a joy which showed that they had had the same fears for me as I had had for them. Then they told me all that had happened after I had left.

With the room swimming in water and muscatel and liqueurs, the musketeers had crashed about in the darkness, cutting themselves on the broken carafes and bottles. No sooner were the candles relighted than they started to run after me, to be stopped at the door by a battered and bleeding cook-house boy, who told them that I was already a long way off; and when they saw the tart squashed to a pulp and covered with mud, they gave up the idea. Considerable havoc had been played with the table, but they managed to save a good deal from the wreck. The two musketeers who had sat opposite to me were especially infuriated, because in hurling myself at the door I had knocked them over and trampled on them. One was convinced that his ribs had been pushed through his lungs, and kept on spitting to see if he brought up any blood. The other (the big blackguard) wanted to kill Sailly;* but she made fun of his frenzies, and the others, amused by this, cried shame on their comrade for his brutality. Then Sailly, who was by no means wanting for wit and was worthy of something better than her unhappy lot, explained that what she had done, she had done for their sakes; because she saw that they were ready to commit some wickedness which they would have regretted afterwards. Thus she also won the bawd's forgiveness. La Dupont affirmed that she would willingly pay twenty-five louis for damages, if thereby she saved a man's life, for she had nothing to reproach herself with so far, and would have been distressed beyond measure if her house had been dishonoured by such a wicked crime. (Yet where was honour to find refuge there!) The musketeers felt certain of meeting me again, taking me for one of those loungers who idle about the town. But I never saw them again. A daughter was the fruit of my adventure with Joconde Sailly. I saw her again, but not until the end of 1762. She was a chorus dancer at the Comédie Française

*Joconde.

from 1760-3 (under what name I know not), but I passed most of 1759, the whole of 1760 and half of 1761 in the Provinces. I saw her again on the 21st of June, 1767, in No 47, Rue Mercier, Nouvelle Halle. I went up to her apartment (for she was already a procuress) and there witnessed the licentious spectacle of one of her girls whipping an old man. Sailly put me in an unlighted room and made me look through the panels of a glazed door. . . . In 1769 I came across her again in the Rue d'Orléans, when I was engaged on my *Pornographe*; our daughter was tall for her age. (Compare also my *Calendar* and *Nuits de Paris.*) Finally I saw her, for the last time, in the amphitheatre boxes at the Français, covered with diamonds bought at the expense of our daughter. I do not know what has happened to her since, but, whatever she may be, a man can never forget a woman whose first favour he has enjoyed without in some sort sinning against nature. And if I remember Sailly with gratitude, judge then how I must feel when I remember that masterpiece of virtue, Madame Parangon.

Such was the two-fold adventure which, for lack of better occupation, I related to Mlle Marie Jehannin. Then I went on to the story of Sophie Wolxem, of the carrying off of Claire Morizot, etc. This kind of confidence invariably excites the same eager interest in the narrator as one takes in heroes of romance. Not only was the young Comtoise pretty, but her beauty was of the type which appeals to the heart and engenders tenderness: like Marianne Tangis, she was modest and gentle. When I think of her now, and call her many charms to mind, I am astonished that she did not hold me, at least during my stay in Dijon: later, I should not have been so cool. Few of our Paris elegants can compare with this tavern servant! Besides a charming face, she had a virtue founded on solid principles. In the course of our third conversation, when she had discovered that I was a decent, honest lad (for I was so at this time; the sojourn in my father's house had restored my natural goodness; but, like another Anteus, my feet had to rest continuously upon my native soil to retain it), Mlle Marie confided to me her motives for being good. First, she feared God. After this she stated her reasons for not letting anyone take liberties with her, from the human standpoint: "I will say nothing about the principles I was brought up in; they were founded on religion, and no one of sixteen is restrained by them. The priests themselves violate them; in fact it is they who have most often attacked my virtue. . . . But I notice how my fellow-servant, who puts up with anything, is regarded: she is treated so coarsely and so shamefully sometimes, especially by the carters, that it is enough to make one shudder! . . . I would rather die than tolerate anything from that sort of person. . . ." At that moment Josette entered: "Aha, Mademoiselle Marie," she said, "so this lad has found a way to tame you? . . . You are right, my girl, it makes things run more smoothly. A *snout* is soon over, and it is easy enough to protect oneself against the rest, especially the big business: *None of that, Lisette!* It spoils the figure, and that would be a real pity with yours! But as for trifles like a little pecking, or a hand here and a hand there, brrrr!" "For goodness sake, Josette, stop talking like that!" "All right, all right! But you'll come to it all the same, like the other affected misses I've seen here before you, Mademoiselle Jehannin: for she truly is the daughter of a Besançon attorney . . ." she said, turning to me; and then laughing: "Kiss her," she said, "in spite of her attorney, and form her a little for me. You are a Parisian and have a soft skin; her virginity belongs to you." Then, as she noticed Marie rearranging her neckerchief to hide her bosom, she said: "For whom are you keeping them? There's a young man." She went out as she said this, leaving Mlle Marie covered with shame.

"She is a kind girl and a good friend," she said, "but she has fits like that, and they pain me a great deal!" But I was very much excited by Josette's remarks; sentiment was silent, and only the body spoke. I approached Mlle Marie and helped her to put the bed in place; then I took her hand, and said: "My pretty one, you are a most amiable girl! Ah, how I could love you! I have an idea. I will go back to my father after the Sessions, turn priest and engage you as my housekeeper, and we will pass our life together as brother and sister." Mlle Marie seemed delighted at this suggestion. "I agree," she said. "I give you my word. . . ." I kissed her twice, without her offering much resistance; then I let her go, as she seemed to wish it.

During the three days that I remained at the inn, I went to see one of M. Parangon's former workmen, Treisignies, who was now employed by the printer Causse, near the *Place Saint-Étienne*. He found me a place in the same business, and I left my inn to go and live in the printer's house, as it was the custom in Dijon for the workmen to lodge with the master and eat at his table. Mlle Marie was very sad when I announced that I was leaving. "I ought to have remembered that an inn is no place for a long stay!" she said to herself. "I am not leaving the town, dear girl," I answered, "and I assure you that I still hold to the decision we spoke of. I shall stay here for the three months of the parliamentary sessions, and when I leave at the beginning of September, it will be to set about the execution of our plan." I kissed her. . . . She seemed very much agitated. . . . I could not control my desire, and Marie yielded to it, saying: "I trust your word, I do not know why. . . . But . . . but . . . are we not sinning against God?" "No," I dared to say, "for you are giving your flower to the man with whom you are to live, and who will stand in place of your husband." She made scarcely any resistance after that. . . .

Instead of going to the printer's house, I resolved to stay one more night at the inn. To myself I excused this delay by determining to employ the next morning in a visit to MM. de Cœurderoi, the president and the councillor; but my real object was to persuade Mlle Marie to share my bed. I made my suggestion after supper and she consented, but her whitening cheeks showed that she was being driven by a force beyond her control. What most surprised me was that she confided her intention to Josette, who was all in favour of it. I overheard their conversation without their being aware of it. "Ah, dear friend, if you only knew!" said Mlle Marie to Josette, kissing her. "Well, what?" "That young man. . . ." "Your Parisian?" "Yes." "You love him?" "Yes." "Very well, better he than another to have your maidenhead; for in any case you would never keep it here. I only managed to keep mine three months, and not quite that even; and you have lasted nearly a year!" "Ah, Josette! He has taken it . . . he took it a little while ago." "Oh, my poor child!" "And . . . he would . . . like . . . to-night. . . ." "I understand. . . . All right, I'll help you, and if anyone calls for you, I will say you have a colic. We must help one another. You have helped me more than once without knowing what the game was; I will help you knowing it. . . . Don't worry, poor little one; it was bound to happen sooner or later in a place like this; and we must never judge anyone. *Judge not, that ye be not judged.* Help, and I will help. You are luckier than I. My maidenhead was taken by a huge hawker all covered with pimples; I suffered excruciatingly! He was as brutal as a stallion. . . . You have lost yours to a young man with a soft skin; I do not pity you." This conversation convinced me of the young Comtoise's genuineness, and I left my door ajar when I went to bed.

Soon after Mlle Marie arrived, pushed along by Joson. I pretended to be asleep. Egged on by Josette, the pretty Comtoise kissed me lightly twice. At the second kiss I caught her in my arms; Joson tore off her neckerchief, and pushed her naked breasts under my lips, saying: "He must rummage all that!" And she went away laughing. Mlle Marie undressed quickly, and when she was in bed I closed with her ecstatically. She made no difficulties in the dark, and though inexperienced, she was docile and tender, and, more important, had plenty of temperament. It was one of the happiest nights I had ever passed (though I had had days which were much more so!) . . . At five o'clock Josette brought us some excellent soup, and kissing us both several times, said: "Well, and am I not kind?" I thanked her warmly. "And what have you to say, Marie? . . . I wager that his kisses were worth all the kisses you had as a child and since? . . . These hawker louts only plague one, but a young man knows how to caress!" Marie was so overcome with shame that she covered her face with her hands. I got up; Marie went into another room and presently came back dressed to say good-bye. She had tears in her eyes, and I held her in my arms as long as possible, that is to say, until someone called her. Joson joined us as she was passing, and congratulated her comrade with considerable freedom: "How lucky you were last night," she said, "to have a young man on you who loves you and is careful for you, and says pretty things to you! I was inquisitive enough to listen; I never had that happiness!" At last we parted, but I promised to come back that evening.

It seems that Marie only gave herself to me because Joson had been urging her for so long to do as she had done; I was the first young man to cross her path who attracted her, and so she yielded. Also it is well known that the Comtoises are not too difficult. I was in the printing room before six o'clock, and set to work.

The printing shop at Dijon reminded me of the one at Auxerre; indeed everything I saw in this town, and especially the presence of Treisignies, took me back to the time of my apprenticeship. These thoughts absorbed and depressed me, and I worked quickly. I did not fail to return to the Porte Guillaume in the evening after supper, to see my dear Marie Jehannin; and Joson was the first to suggest that she should contrive another night for us. I thanked her, but explained that I could not sleep away from the house my very first night, and begged her to reserve her good offices for another occasion. "Is it true that you are going to be a priest?" "I am thinking of it." "Oh, how happy Marie will be with you! You will live together in your cure like two children, for she is a gentle creature and so are you. . . . Shall you sleep together?" "Certainly; a priest is a man." "I believe you! Listen, I will tell you something: one day a country curé, who was staying here, made sheep's eyes at me. I went to his room at midnight, and he never stopped till five o'clock. Look," and she held up ten fingers. "I was finished. He asked for water in the morning on account of this affair, because he had to go and say Mass. . . . What does that matter, when one is clean?"

Next day I made an arrangement with Bachot, another of the compositors, whereby I could sleep out without scandal. In accordance with this he told the servant girl, when he came in that evening, that everyone was in bed. Meanwhile I spent the night with Mlle Marie, who lavished caresses upon me. I have never met so fond a girl, except perhaps Zéphire. . . . Joson let me out at five o'clock and, at my signal, Bachot came down and opened the street door to me, and I was the first at work. I often repeated this excursion. I would go to the inn every other evening, one of the girls would let me in, and I would wait until my young friend was at liberty.

One evening, about the 20th July, both girls were so busy that they could not let me in; but there was a touch of malice in this on Joson's part. I could see that Marie was, in fact, kept by her duties. It was very dark and, as the dogs knew me, I slipped into the courtyard and hid among the bales of merchandise. About ten o'clock Joson came to the same place with a big hawker. . . . The rest can be guessed. . . . As she got up, she burst out laughing: "My poor friend! She is in despair! Your friend had her last night. I made her think he was a lover she has here, a printer, and told her that he had asked to be put in that room, and also that she must get to bed in the dark. How she ran! You can imagine what a welcome she got! Lud, she was feasted! In the morning . . ." (and she burst out laughing again) "instead of her pretty gallant, she found the ugliest thing, all big and swarthy!" (screaming with laughter). "She fled! But oh, she is miserable! . . . The man promised her ten louis if she would come back of her own will to-night; and I shall make every effort to see that she does not miss such a windfall!" I left quietly by the courtyard after I had heard this, very grieved to have been the cause of pretty Marie's ruin and cursing Joson's pretended kindness, which was only licence in disguise. As I went out, I saw a big swarthy man touch Marie's breast; she repulsed him, but irresolutely; and, as a matter of fact, I heard next day that, urged by her comrade, she had passed the night with the hawker; and that he had given her her ten louis when he left the next morning, thinking that he had plucked her flower. I gave up visiting the inn of Saint-Nicolas, and turned my attention to my young neighbours in the Place Saint-Étienne.

Owing to Marie, I had neglected to call on the MM. de Cœurderoi, one of whom was president and the other a councillor of the Parliament of Burgundy. The son of the former was later to be first president of the

Parliament of Nancy. So one Sunday I dressed in black, and waited upon the president with a letter from my father. He read the letter, looked at me and asked what he could do for me. I answered that I was a printer and had come to Dijon for the Sessions. "My powers do not extend to the giving of the right to set up as a master printer here; that is a very difficult matter." "I only called to have the honour of saluting you, Monsieur," I answered. "In that case you must have some breakfast." He rang the bell, and told the servant to bring some chocolate, which I drank alone as M. Cœurderoi had already breakfasted. This was my only visit to my grandmother Simon's relatives; for my natural shyness with strangers prevented me from waiting on the councillor. A complete change was again to come into my life, for I was like the moving sands of Lybia.

The first two of my neighbours to attract my attention were a tall slim girl with ash-blonde hair, and an eager, vivacious little brunette. The former, *Manette Teinturier*, was daughter to the clerk of the hairdressers' guild; the latter, *Manon Duveau*, was the daughter of a cathedral musician. Manon had been born and brought up in Paris until the age of fifteen, when her father had left there; consequently she was a complete Parisian, and very wide-awake. Her colouring was as vivid as her gestures, and she had a most attractive smile, etc. Mlle Teinturier was tall and indolent, but clean, and she had the most beautiful hair in the world. The two girls were inseparable; for about three years they had occupied the same house, the daughter of the landlord (Manette Teinturier) on the first floor, and the tenant on the second.

After I gave up my evening visits to the Image Saint-Nicolas, I was reduced to the sole companionship of two of my fellow printers: Bachot and a man called Dubois. My old acquaintance Treisignies had inherited money from his father, wore braided clothes and mixed with people very much above his station. He was looked on as a future parliamentary councillor. Moreover he had his elder brother's house to go to. This brother was a master binder, and none too well off, being the son of a first wife who had had no money; but he had a very pretty wife, with whom the younger Treisignies, although her brother-in-law, was much in love. Therefore he contributed to the household and held the children, as in Thibet, in common with his brother. Also he was ten or twelve years older than myself. Consequently I did not like him much, and we never met save in the printer's house. Neither had I any taste for taverns, and never went there with Bachot. I had meant to stay in the shop and read as at Auxerre, but either times had changed or the books were less entertaining; I quickly tired of them, and went out and sat on the bench in the shadow by the door, whence I had a good view of Manette, Manon, and the former's sister-in-law, who was a stranger to the town. These three were always together, because there was no one else of their station in the neighbourhood. I dared not join them, as I had never spoken to them; I was waiting my opportunity. While I was in this state of indecision our cook, who was called *Tourambulante* because she was so fat, brought one of her friends from opposite into the shop, a girl as pretty as Marie Jehannin and much more ingenuous. *Marianne Milan* was servant to an old lady, the mother of a councillor: in face she was like that pretty Edmée Boissard of Nitry, of whom I have spoken, and she was fragile and delicately made as was Edmée Servigné, or rather Tiennette. "You see some of our countryfolk are just as pretty as the young ladies," said Tourambulante noticing my admiration. "The proof is before my eyes," I answered, and putting aside my book I drew Marianne down on to the bench beside me, saying:

"Come here, my pretty one, and let me kiss you." "Only on the cheek!" exclaimed Tourambulante. "Is one kissed anywhere else?" asked Marianne ingenuously. "He will show you, you'll see, if you let him," answered Tourambulante. While she was speaking, I kissed Marianne's pretty mouth five or six times. "He has shown me!" exclaimed Marianne, "and I could not stop him!" Then we talked, and my decent conversation won her confidence. The cook left her alone with me, and I did not abuse her trust. But I profited by my self-control some days after. One evening, seeing her at her door, I suggested half-an-hour's walk. "It is only half-past eight," she answered. "I have an hour." I asked her to take me to the Park. "It is too far." "Then we will only go half the way." We set out, and I measured out the time. When we reached the avenue, I drew Marianne to one side under the trees, saying: "Let us sit down here, my girl." She permitted herself to be led. I began with tender caresses which did not alarm her; but little by little passion mounted in me, and I sought complete happiness. Marianne opposed me, but with an angelic sweetness and little caressing words which excited me the more: I might have been with her namesake, the tender-hearted Marianne Tangis. . . . At last I told her peremptorily what I wanted. The sweet child was gentleness and candour personified; she was frightened, but still loving, and she ceased to struggle. Then I ordered her to help me. She did so; and I deflowered her with infinite difficulty. . . . (O principles recovered in my father's house, what had become of you?) I had behaved like a blackguard; but I was so tender with her afterwards that little Milan forgave me. "I forgive you, bad man," she said with real sorrow, "but will God forgive you? . . ." And thereafter she consistently avoided me in the evening while I was at Dijon.

After this little adventure I had another which was engineered by

Treisignies; but I will reserve this until we come to the tale I told to the young Lyonnaise.

Finally I turned my attention seriously to making the acquaintance of my neighbour Manette. Bachot had been captive for some weeks past to the stimulating attractions of the sprightly Duveau. So one evening he let me come with him to sit with the two charmers, but only after exacting a promise that I would not be his rival; a promise I had no difficulty in giving as I preferred Manette. He introduced me as a fellow printer, and even added some words of commendation in accordance with what he had heard from Treisignies, who had a high opinion of me. So we arranged ourselves: I loved Mlle Teinturier, Bachot loved Mlle Duveau, and Dubois, the last word in fops, only loved himself. The loves of Bachot and the musician's daughter always remained at the same stage, neither advancing nor retreating; but I never willingly endured such amorous stagnation; my progress or the reverse was always rapid. To see Manette, to be attracted by her, to say and write fond but sensible things to her, to try and win her to share my feelings, and to succeed in part, was the matter of a week from our first introduction. My ardour communicated some of my own rapidity to Teinturier's indolent nature. I will not compare this passion with those others I have had; it was a hybrid growth for, as with sweet Tangis, it was her sex I loved, with all its charm and gentleness, rather than herself. Bachot was amazed at my expeditious way of making love: "The devil!" he said as we were going away one night. "How you bring a girl along! I wish I had your energy!"

On the 24th of July, the day after we had been introduced, I wrote an acrostic to pretty Teinturier: it was my usual gambit, as this ridiculous form always impresses ignorant young women as the height of ingenuity.

To make their name out of the lines' initial letters seems to them a masterpiece of genius and contrivance; they will show it to all their friends, enchanted by the pretty compliment, which no one can doubt has been written especially for them. And I may remark in this connection that women in general are just as eager to display compositions written in their honour as poets are to read their own productions. . . . Here is my acrostic:

> *Being as shy in your presence as I was amorous, O adorable Manette, I did not dare to admit the power of your fine eyes and my too prompt defeat: growing each day the more enslaved, I felt a voluptuous surging in my soul that freshened its desire and fanned its flame, though these were not known to the delightful Cause of them! Listen to my trembling avowal; nothing shall hide the name of Her who burns me.*

I presented this poem, a pitiable production yet full of diffidence and respect, just as we were separating for the night, and Manette and her friend fell into an ecstasy of admiration. This is no hyperbole: they manifested their astonishment to Bachot and asked his opinion on this miracle of wit; and he, but little better informed than they, agreed with the two girls. They smiled upon me next evening. I had expected this, and had the verses written in Paris to Mlle Lefaucheux ready. They found them charming; on account of the acrostic, I could do nothing that was not excellent.

This trifling adventure with Manette might have become serious, if, apart from other little distractions, I had not had a strange and extraordinary encounter in Dijon, which we shall soon hear about. I find my progress noted day by day in my books: how young Teinturier (who wrote her name Tainturier) was at first indifferent; how, after my verses and some very tender letters, she warmed to me little by little, and how she did not confess her love for me until I had spoken to her father. Then she was completely mine. . . . But before pursuing my success with Mlle Teinturier, whose attachment for me might be compared with that of Marianne Tangis (only the warm-hearted Auxerroise surpassed the pretty Dijonnaise in tenderness and wealth), I must relate here the only incident savouring of debauch which befell me in Dijon. This was before I had become acquainted with Manette.

One evening, not knowing what had become of my two comrades and seeing no one at our neighbours' door, I went for a walk by myself round the rampart. I heard some sound at a distance, and, going towards it, found a soldier with a prostitute. He was making her cry out, so I ventured to recommend a little gentleness. I spoke with such simple frankness that he got up at once, saying: "Here, you can have her. . . . Would you believe it, although she is a whore, the bitch is so small I can't do anything!" And he handed the unfortunate girl over to me. She was passably good looking. I paid in advance, and saw at once that she was ready to do anything I wanted. She was indeed very narrow. *Petiteporte* (as she was called) was so pleased with the exchange, that she offered to take me as her man and master and keep me on her earnings. I refused with thanks, giving her to understand that I was not a good enough blade to fight the soldiers of the garrison every day. I advised her to go to Paris, and gave her La Dupont's address on a card, with these words underneath: "This girl is always a virgin." I told her to give my compliments to Bathilde and Sailly, and to tell them that I took a great interest in her. . . . Petiteporte left next day, and was ultimately received by Bathilde: and the latter placed her with Catiche, a friend of hers and afterwards her "Mamma." . . . Petiteporte became pregnant and bore a daughter on the 30th of April, 1760, nine months after our amorous encounter. . . .

To return: I was saying that there was much of Marianne Tangis about

Mlle Teinturier's character and qualities, and that she inspired something of the same feeling, but less tender, less affectionate, less positive. My heart was not utterly engaged as in my grand passions, or rather as in the major aspects of my one and only love. Furthermore, the customs of Dijon were less congenial to my way of thinking than those of Auxerre; there was something more solid about the latter, more Jansenist; the manners were not so good as at Dijon, but the passions were more profound; also there were fewer amusements at Auxerre, so that lovers were more concentrated on the objects of their love.

It was my judicious letters which finally won Manette's heart. They dwelt on the way in which I proposed to love my wife, and she showed them to her father. He was enchanted by them and, desiring to have some conversation with me, he came and sat by us one evening, and listened to our talk. He was satisfied with the propriety of my views, and said as much to his daughter. Thus reassured by her father, the young person confided herself without reserve to my good faith, and displayed an artless and unsuspicious tenderness.

END OF THE FOURTH VOLUME

AND

END OF THE EIGHTH VOLUME IN RESTIF'S EDITION

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS
PROJECTED BY THE AUTHOR
FOR THIS VOLUME

64. HI, THERE, MONSIEUR L'ABBÉ

Monsieur Nicolas, after having picnicked with his friends on one of their Sunday excursions, is sitting between Zéphire, who has a harp lying at her feet, and Amélie. . . . Zoé is sitting facing Loiseau, Mme Deschamps has Renaud upon her knees, Mlle Mentelle is reclining against Boudard, Manon is in Gaudet's arms. They form five groups. On the top of the hill some people can be seen, exclaiming: "Hi, there, Monsieur l'abbé, hi, there!" *"It is with us that they are finding fault," says Monsieur Nicolas. The fruiterer can be seen cleansing a spit, etc.* [*page 226*]

65. AGATHE FAGARD AND SÉRAPHINE JOLON

Monsieur Nicolas with Séraphine Jolon, whom he has just "made a woman of," still in his arms as this pretty girl's sister-in-law, Agathe Fagard, enters. Séraphine cries out: "Help! Help!" as her victor lets go of her to see who has come in. [*page 244*]

66. AMÉLIE AND THE HARP OF ZÉPHIRE

Monsieur Nicolas in the street; Amélie at the first floor window playing Zéphire's harp. [*page 281*]

67. SUADÈLE BITTEN

Monsieur Nicolas on his knees sucking Suadèle's left hand, which has just been bitten by a mad dog. Zoé, Mme Deschamps, Mlle Mentelle and Manon are standing about them, and farther off, near the Montmartre Butts, are Loiseau, Renaud, Boudard, Gaudet and the fruiterer: "Leave me alone! I am saving my Zéphire!" [*page 287*]

68. HENRIETTE KIRCHER

Monsieur Nicolas in the room of Henriette and her aunt Macbell, being married by a bogus Protestant minister in the presence of Macbell, Mylord Taaff and two English witnesses. "Who gives this woman to this man?" Taaff: *"I do."*

In a cloudy background we see a second marriage of the same two taking place at Saint-André before a priest. [*page 297*]

69. EPISODES: THÉRÈSE AND PÈLERINE

Monsieur Nicolas on a staircase making signs to Thérèse in a closet; she shows him her bared breasts. Standing behind him Pèlerine Berthé is gesticulating: "Quite right, quite right!"

"Shall I hide from you still, O my so sweet
Aminta. . . ." [*page 319*]

70. MLLE LEFAUCHEUX

The illustration is divided lengthwise into two parts. On the one side Isabelle Lefaucheux is seen issuing from the closet on the stairs, while Monsieur Nicolas is standing four steps below, enraptured by the sight of her short skirt, her slender legs, her tiny feet, her perfect waist and compressed bosoms, etc. "Che boccone!"

On the other side Monsieur Nicolas is pushing Isabelle Lefaucheux to the side of a bed, upon which she falls on her back: "I want to . . . prove how much I esteem you!" [*page 328*]

71. JARRYE DATTÉ AND VICTOIRE VERSAILLES

Monsieur Nicolas with Jarrye in a lighted room at evening: "Let us punish Pointot!"

Monsieur Nicolas, after he has eaten, pushing Victoire towards a bed, at the same time showing her some letters. "Oh, please don't tell!" she is saying. [*page 336*]

72. MONSIEUR DEBIERNE'S SON

Monsieur Nicolas at Saint-Bris seated at table with the Debierne family: father, mother, a son of twenty, a daughter of fifteen, and others younger. The curé and certain relatives are also present. "But my mother . . . is a mother." [*page 349*]

73. LOISEAU LAMENTED

Monsieur Nicolas, in the lonely valley of Bourdenet near the Nitry woods, is mourning aloud for his friend Loiseau. "All nature grieves for you, O my friend!' A solitary snipe is seen beating its wings and screaming at a serpent which is devouring one of its nestlings. [*page 361*]

74. HÔTEL DE HOLLANDE: CLAIRE, SOPHIE WOLXEM

Monsieur Nicolas in his room at the inn. His left arm is about Marie Jehannin's waist; his right hand holds a little stick with which he is pointing out details of his adventures in Paris, the three actresses, and the Hôtel de Hollande, etc. on a picture.

Pretty Claire Morizot following a street porter, and saying to Monsieur Nicolas: "Perhaps I am lost!"

Sophie Wolxem sitting on Monsieur Nicolas's knees. [*page 368*]

75. AURORE

Monsieur Nicolas listening to the tale of Aurore, who is showing him a picture in which a man in a frenzy of lust is strangling her and trying to tear off one of her nipples. "He wanted to mangle me with his teeth." [*page 371*]

76. BATHILDE

Monsieur Nicolas introduced to Bathilde, aged thirteen, by the eighteen-year-old Aurore, who has been singing his praises to the young Alsatian prostitute: "I will keep a look-out from the second floor." [*page 373*]

77. SAILLY

Monsieur Nicolas at table with Sailly (facing him), Bathilde, La Dupont and the four musketeers, at the moment when Joconde Sailly, who has only left one light burning, upsets the table with everything upon it.

A cook behind Monsieur Nicolas's chair is saying: "Take your chance when the dessert comes in." [*page 378*]

78. THE INN AT DIJON

Monsieur Nicolas has just been conversing with Marie Jehannin, a pretty Comtoise with a wasp-like waist. Plump Josette, her comrade, seeing her rearranging her disordered neckerchief, says to her: "He is young. What more do you want?" [*page 381*]

79. MARIANNE MILAN AND PETITEPORTE

Monsieur Nicolas has just forced Marianne Milan to yield to his desire. She is still in great disorder. He is kissing her hand, and asking her pardon: "Bad man, I forgive you."

Monsieur Nicolas on the ramparts receiving Petiteporte from the hands of a soldier, who is still partially undressed. The girl is still on the ground. "There you are, you can have her." [*page 389*]

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